Sir Real's

UNDERGROUND COMIX CLASSIX

A+Plus #4

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Stories:

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20 - A Night On The Town
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66 - untitled
67 - untitled (photo?)

Artists:

Kevin Siembieda - 1, 3-19(i,dialog), 20-27(i,l), 64
Tom Orzechowski - 1(logo)
James Dombroski (art director) - 2, 31-38
Arnold Tiddleburg - 2(e)
Ed Kwiatkowski - 3-19(p,s)
Brian Siembieda - 20-27(s,p)
Fredrik King - 28-30
Alex Marciniszyn - 39-43
Fran Trevisani - 44, 65
Bill Bryan - 45-59
Gordon Alverez - 61(letter)
Patrick Kama - 61(letter)
Richard Bruning - 62(letter)
Warren Klofkorn - 62(letter)
Huw D. Evans - 62-63(letter)
Gregory D. Driver - 63(letter)
Tom Adams - 63(letter)
Howard G. Ashnell - 63(letter)
Kim Fujihara - 66
John Benson - 68
Mathew Garvel (business director)

Comments:

n/a

DETROIT'S FIRST COMIC BOOK

A+PLUS

issue 4

one dollar

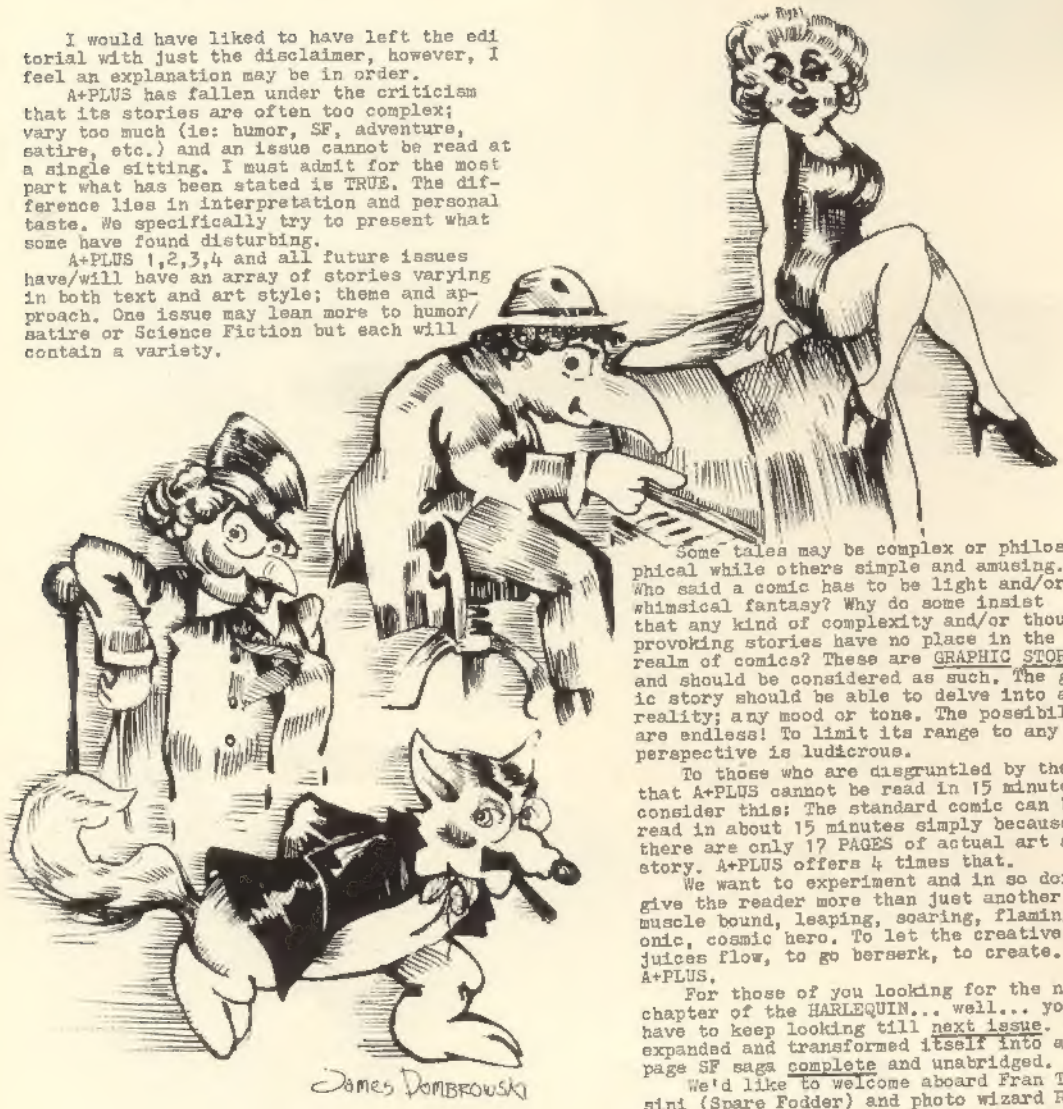
68 PAGES
SCIENCE FICTION
FANTASY
SATIRE

WARNING! THIS IS NOT A STANDARD COMIC. IT CAN NOT BE READ IN A SINGLE SITTING.

I would have liked to have left the edi torial with just the disclaimer, however, I feel an explanation may be in order.

A+PLUS has fallen under the criticism that its stories are often too complex; vary too much (ie: humor, SF, adventure, satire, etc.) and an issue cannot be read at a single sitting. I must admit for the most part what has been stated is TRUE. The difference lies in interpretation and personal taste. We specifically try to present what some have found disturbing.

A+PLUS 1,2,3,4 and all future issues have/will have an array of stories varying in both text and art style; theme and approach. One issue may lean more to humor/satire or Science Fiction but each will contain a variety.



Some tales may be complex or philosophical while others simple and amusing. Who said a comic has to be light and/or whimsical fantasy? Why do some insist that any kind of complexity and/or thought provoking stories have no place in the realm of comics? These are GRAPHIC STORIES and should be considered as such. The graphic story should be able to delve into any reality; any mood or tone. The possibilities are endless! To limit its range to any one perspective is ludicrous.

To those who are disgruntled by the fact that A+PLUS cannot be read in 15 minutes consider this: The standard comic can be read in about 15 minutes simply because there are only 17 PAGES of actual art and story. A+PLUS offers 4 times that.

We want to experiment and in so doing give the reader more than just another muscle bound, leaping, soaring, flaming, bionic, cosmic hero. To let the creative juices flow, to go berserk, to create... A+PLUS.

For those of you looking for the next chapter of the HARLEQUIN... well... you'll have to keep looking till next issue. Ideas expanded and transformed itself into a 20 page SF saga complete and unabridged.

We'd like to welcome aboard Fran Trevasini (Spare Fodder) and photo wizard Ray Schwartz. Me? Oh I just write editorials.

Arnold Tiddleburg

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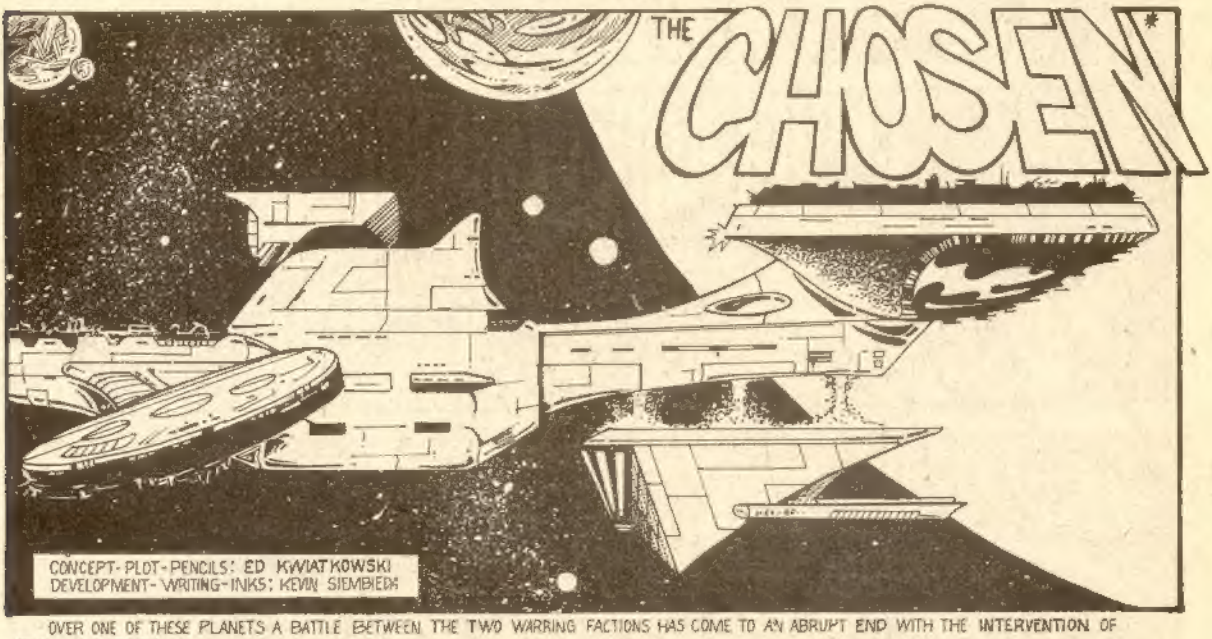
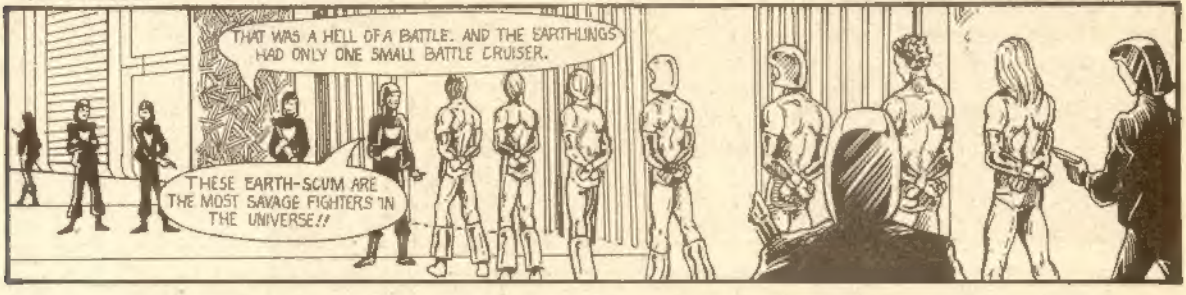
WAR GOES ON AMID THE GALAXIES. EARTH AND HER ALLIES HAVE PITTED THEIR MIGHT AGAINST AN ENIGMATIC ENEMY FOR THREE FUTILE EONS. DOZENS OF WORLDS HAVE BEEN UNWITTINGLY SUCKED INTO THE FORAY.

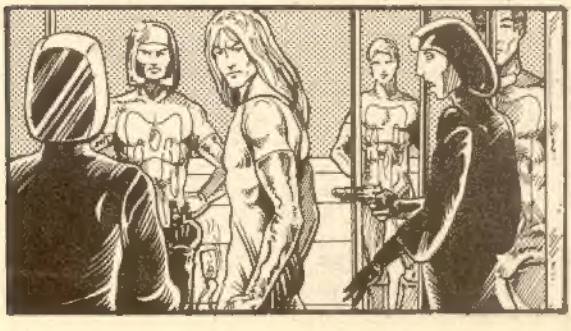
YET THERE IS ONE STRATEGIC SECTOR OF SPACE THAT REMAINS UNTOUCHED BY THIS POPULAR WAR, SHUNNED MIGHT BE A BETTER TERM.

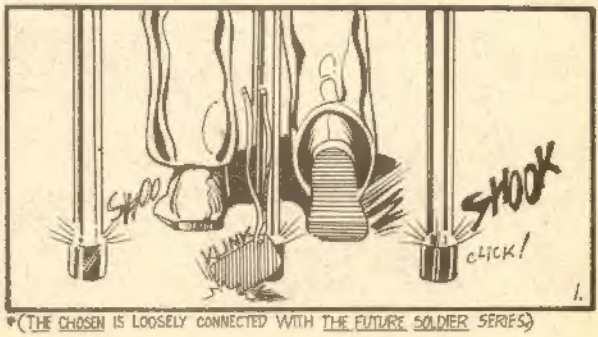
THE PLACE, THE SWORORK GALAXY, ONE OF THE KNOW UNIVERSES GREATEST MYSTERIES. FOR THIS GALAXY HOUSES A 1000 WIDELY POPULATED WORLDS MOST OF WHICH HAVE MASTERED SPACE TRAVEL. THUS, CREATING THE LARGEST CONGLAMORATION, HODGEPODGE OF TECHNOLOGY, MYSTICISM, CULTURES AND COUNTER-CULTURES THIS UNIVERSE WILL PROBABLY EVER HAVE THE MISFORTUNE TO SEE. A HOME OF ROGUES, PIRATES, WARLOCKS, GENIUSES AND THE WEIRDEST ARRAY OF PEOPLE THAT JUST DON'T GIVE A FLYING PHAR-QUAR ABOUT ANY OUTSIDERS WAR.



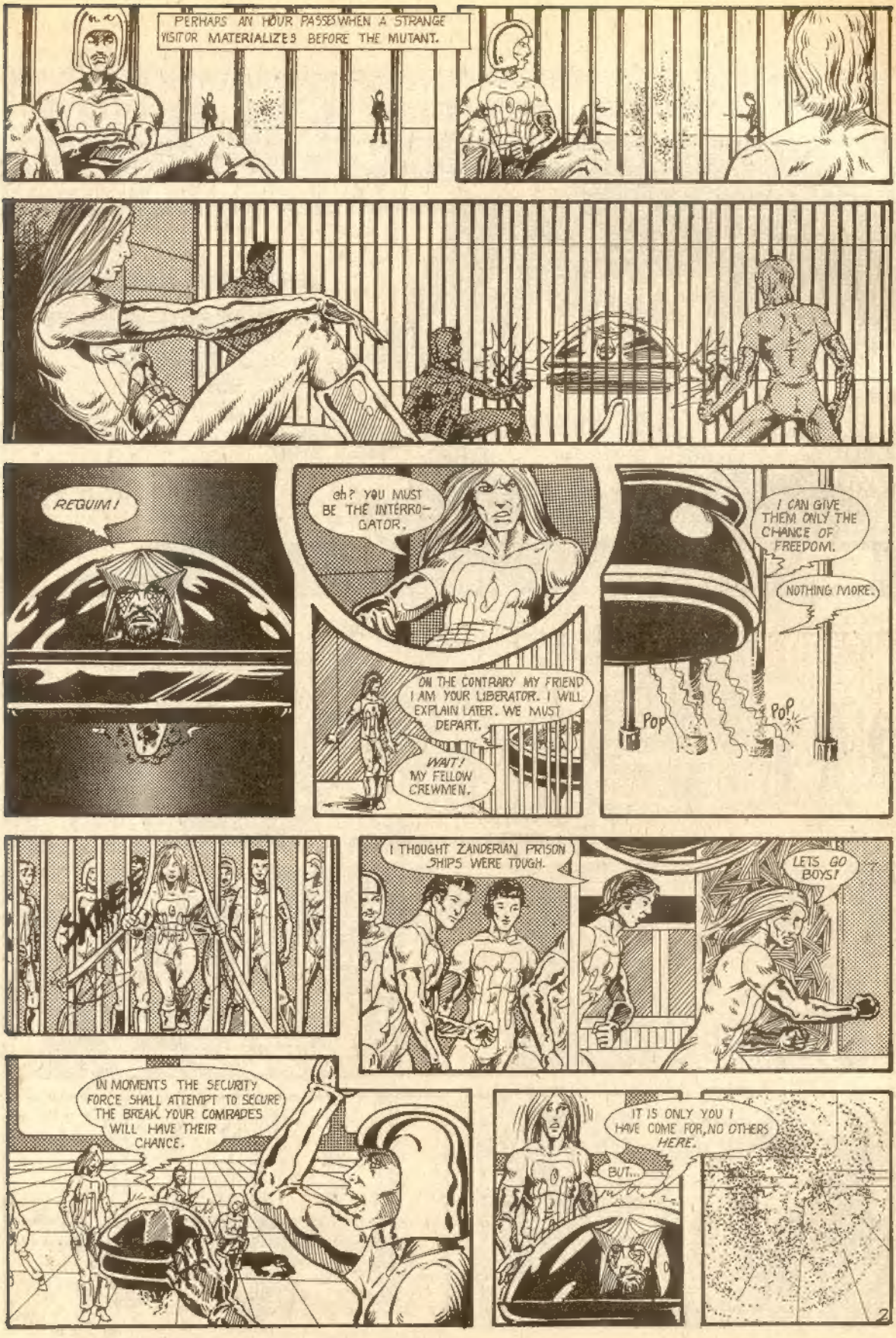
OVER ONE OF THESE PLANETS A BATTLE BETWEEN THE TWO WARRING FACTIONS HAS COME TO AN ABRUPT END WITH THE INTERVENTION OF THE ZANDERIANS.


THAT WAS A HELL OF A BATTLE. AND THE EARTHLINGS HAD ONLY ONE SMALL BATTLE CRUISER.
THESE EARTH-SCUM ARE THE MOST SAVAGE FIGHTERS IN THE UNIVERSE!!



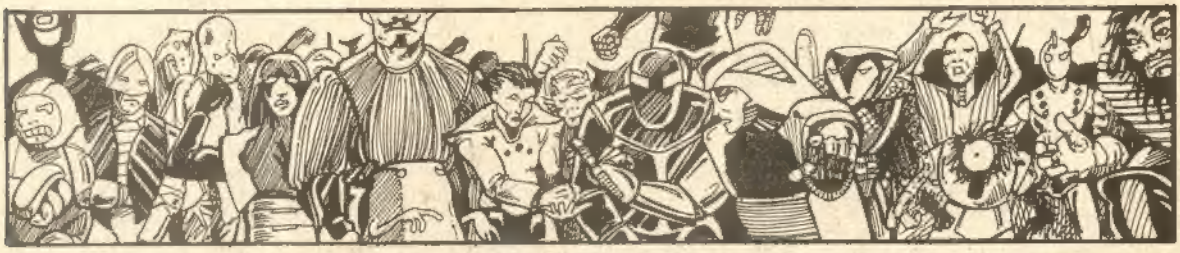


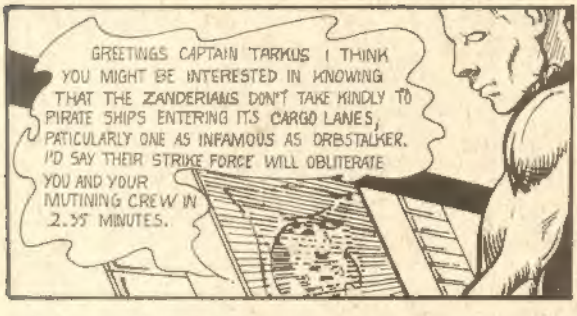
*(THE CHOSEN IS LOOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE FUTURE SOLDIER SERIES)

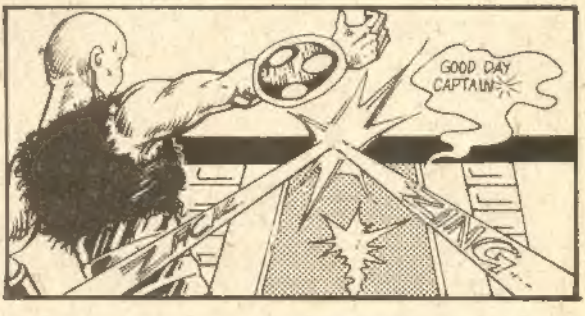

PERHAPS AN HOUR PASSES WHEN A STRANGE VISITOR MATERIALIZES BEFORE THE MUTANT.
REQUIM!
oh? YOU MUST BE THE INTERRO-GATOR.
ON THE CONTRARY MY FRIEND I AM YOUR LIBERATOR. I WILL EXPLAIN LATER. WE MUST DEPART.
WAIT! MY FELLOW CREWMEN.
I CAN GIVE THEM ONLY THE CHANCE OF FREEDOM.
NOTHING MORE.
POP
POP
I THOUGHT ZANDERIAN PRISON SHIPS WERE TOUGH.
LETS GO BOYS!
IN MOMENTS THE SECURITY FORCE SHALL ATTEMPT TO SECURE THE BREAK. YOUR COMRADES WILL HAVE THEIR CHANCE.
IT IS ONLY YOU I HAVE COME FOR, NO OTHERS HERE.
BUT...
2

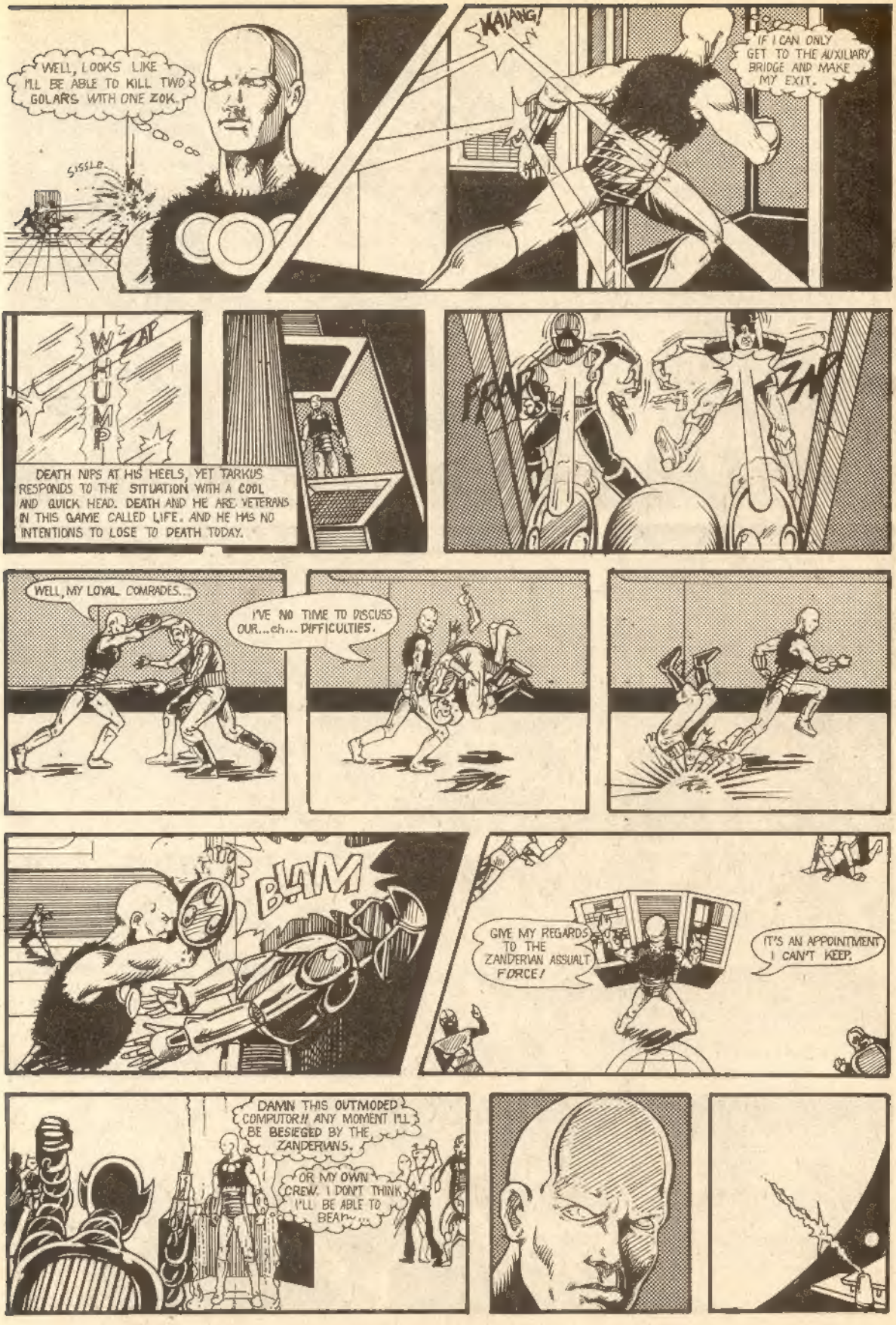
SCANT SECONDS LATER...
THE ORBSTALKER, THE MOST NOTORIOUS OF PIRATE SHIPS, ENTERS THE ZANDERIAN ORBIT.

STRANGELY ENOUGH, THOUGHTS OF PLUNDER ARE NOT ON THE MINDS OF THE ORBSTALKERS MOTLEY CREW. TODAY THEY ARE CONSUMED WITH MUTINY!




GREETINGS CAPTAIN TARKUS I THINK YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING THAT THE ZANDERIANS DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO PIRATE SHIPS ENTERING ITS CARGO LANES, PATICULARLY ONE AS INFAMOUS AS ORBSTALKER. I'D SAY THEIR STRIKE FORCE WILL OBLITERATE YOU AND YOUR MUTINING CREW IN 2.35 MINUTES.




WELL, LOOKS LIKE I'LL BE ABLE TO KILL TWO GOLARS WITH ONE ZOK.
SISSLE
KAIANG!
IF I CAN ONLY GET TO THE AUXILIARY BRIDGE AND MAKE MY EXIT.
WZAP
HUMP
DEATH NIPS AT HIS HEELS, YET TARKUS RESPONDS TO THE SITUATION WITH A COOL AND QUICK HEAD. DEATH AND HE ARE VETERANS IN THIS GAME CALLED LIFE. AND HE HAS NO INTENTIONS TO LOSE TO DEATH TODAY.
FRAK
ZAP
WELL, MY LOYAL COMRADES...
I'VE NO TIME TO DISCUSS OUR...eh... DIFFICULTIES.
BLAM
GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE ZANDERIAN ASSUALT FORCE!
IT'S AN APPOINTMENT I CAN'T KEEP.
DAMN THIS OUTMODED COMPUTOR!! ANY MOMENT I'LL BE BESIEGED BY THE ZANDERIANS.
OR MY OWN CREW. I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO BEAM...

TARKUS MATERIALIZES IN A CROWDED BROTHEL UNNOTICED, FOR TRAVELERS BEAM IN AND OUT THROUGHOUT THE DAY.
QUICKLY HE MELTS INTO THE SHADOWS FULLY AWARE THAT HIS ALIEN SAVIOUR HAS SOME ULTERIOR MOTIVES.
FOR NOW HE CAN ONLY WAIT.
THE TIME IS NOW! WE MUST BRING AN END TO THIS WARRING!
LONG AGO IT WAS SAID THAT ONCE THE PEOPLES OF THE GALAXIES HARNESSED SPACE THERE WOULD BE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP. YET WE FIGHT AMONG OURSELVES FOR...FOR WHAT?!
MEANINGLESS BAUBLES OF WEALTH!
WHO IS THAT ASS?
THAT IS EMPTON. BEHIND THAT REGAL FIGURE IS A MAN OF MANY IMAGES. SOME SAY HE'S A SAVIOUR, OTHERS A POMPOUS DREAMER, MOST BELIEVE HIM TO BE A CON ARTIST.
Ah, SHUT UP!
Yeah!
HEY! LET GO!!
GET DOWN, YOU PHONY!
5.

AH, THAT'S BETTER. WHEN I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY I EXPECT PEOPLE TO LISTEN.

NOW WHERE WAS I?

Oh YES!!

WELL ONE THINGS CERTAIN, HE'S A DAMN GOOD FIGHTER.

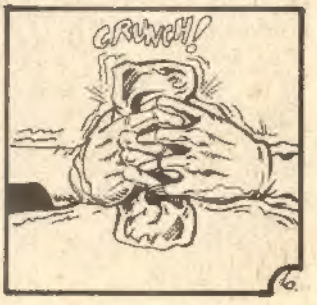
OKAY GOLDEN HAIR, INCITING A RIOT, ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA.... COME WITH US.
GENTLEMEN, THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE...
CUT THE BULL! COME ON!
AH SIR... THAT ALIEN.
OVER THERE.

EARTHLING! YOU SHOULD HAVE KEPT RUNNING WITH THE REST OF THE SOLDIERS.
I GOT THIRSTY.

AND I'M STILL THIRSTY. SO WHY DON'T YOU BOYS GO PLAY ELSEWHERE.

SO YOU'RE THIRSTY!

WHAK


CRUNCH!

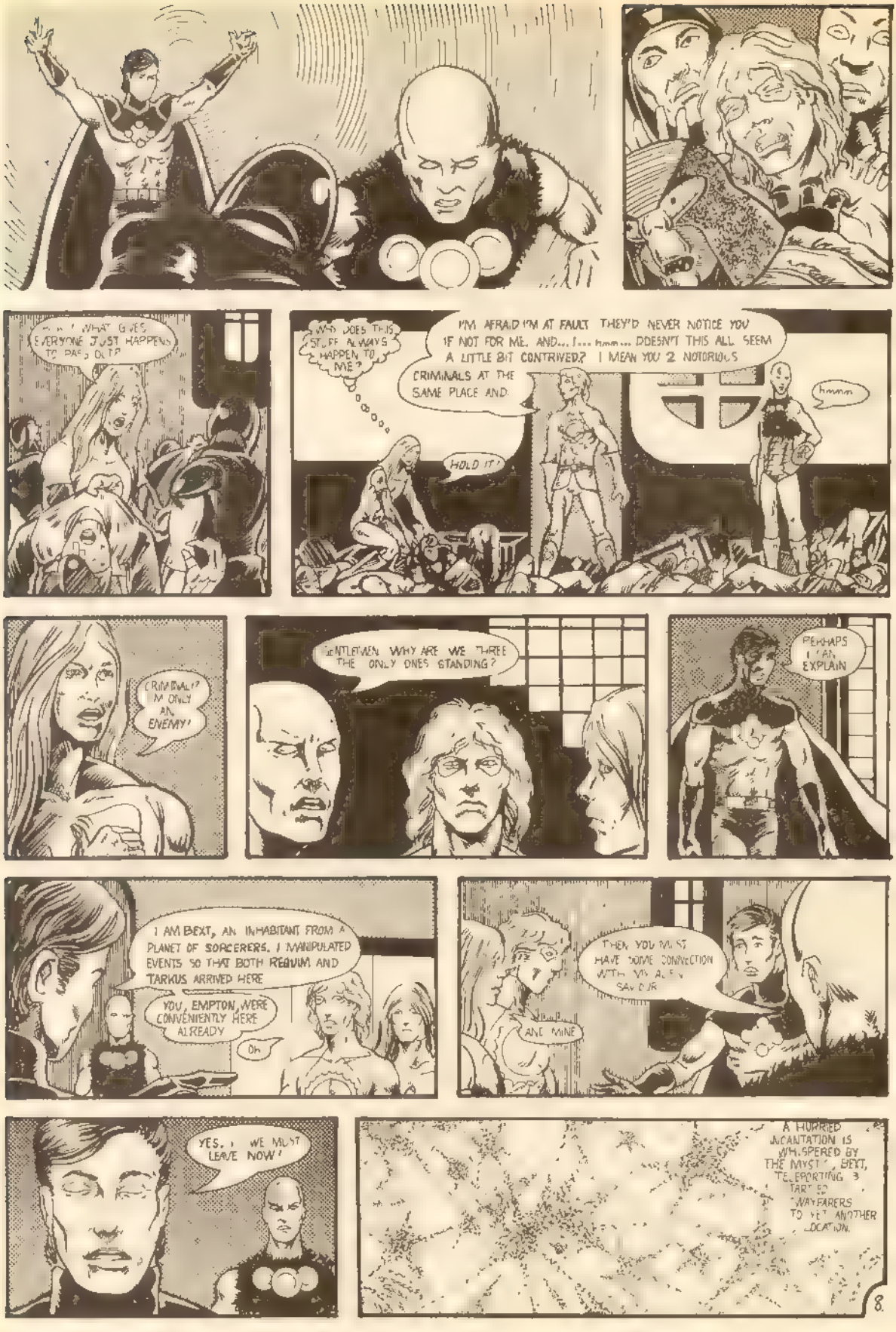
WUMP

OUTNUMBERED! LET'S SEE IF I CAN MAKE THIS FIGHT A LITTLE MORE EVEN.
THAT GUY...EMPTON AIN'T ALL BAD, HE'S GIVING ME A HAND. TOO BAD HE'S HATED BY EVERYONE HERE, 'CAUSE THEY'RE HELPING THE POLICE BRING US DOWN!

HEY!

THAT'S TARK!
SO MUCH FOR REMAINING ANONYMOUS.

7

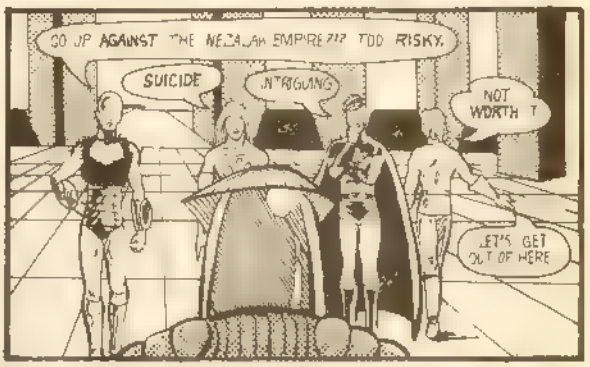

WHAT GIVES? EVERYONE JUST HAPPENS TO PASS OUT?
WHY DOES THIS STUFF ALWAYS HAPPEN TO ME?
I'M AFRAID I'M AT FAULT. THEY'D NEVER NOTICE YOU IF NOT FOR ME. AND... I.... hmm... DOESN'T THIS ALL SEEM A LITTLE BIT CONTRIVED? I MEAN YOU 2 NOTORIOUS CRIMINALS AT THE SAME PLACE AND.
HOLD IT!
hmmm
CRIMINAL!? I'M ONLY AN ENEMY!
GENTLEMEN. WHY ARE WE THREE THE ONLY ONES STANDING?
PERHAPS I CAN EXPLAIN
I AM BEXT, AN INHABITANT FROM A PLANET OF SORCERERS. I MANIPULATED EVENTS SO THAT BOTH REQUIM AND TARKUS ARRIVED HERE
YOU, EMPTON, WERE CONVENIENTLY HERE ALREADY
Oh
THEN, YOU MUST HAVE SOME CONNECTION WITH YOUR SAVIOUR
AND MINE
YES. WE MUST LEAVE NOW!
A HURRIED INCANTATION IS WHISPERED BY THE MYSTIC, BEXT, TELEPORTING 3 TARTED WAYFARERS TO YET ANOTHER LOCATION.
8.

MOMENTS LATER ELSE WHERE
YOU SEE WE FOUR ARE ALL SPECIALISTS IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER YOU THREE ARE AMONG THE BEST FIGHTING MEN IN THIS QUADRANT OF SPACE IT IS ILLEGAL TO USE MAGIC IN MOST PLACES OTHER THAN MY HOME WORLD, THUS WE ARE ALL REGARDED AS DANGEROUSLY POWERFUL CRIMINALS
EXACTLY! I HAVE NEED OF YOUR SPECIAL POWERS.. ABILITIES AM TAR ALEXUS. LET IT SUFFICE TO SAY THAT AM A RIVAL POWER AND RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THE NEZALAH EMPIRE HAVE CHOSEN YOU FOUR TO AID ME IN MY CRUSADE AGAINST...

SORRY. WE JUST DON'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE PICKED FOR ANYTHING. YOU MAY ASK AND MAYBE WE'LL VOLUNTEER OUR SERVICES
IF IT'S WORTH OUR WHILE

THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T CARE ABOUT MEANINGLESS WEALTH!?
WELL . . er

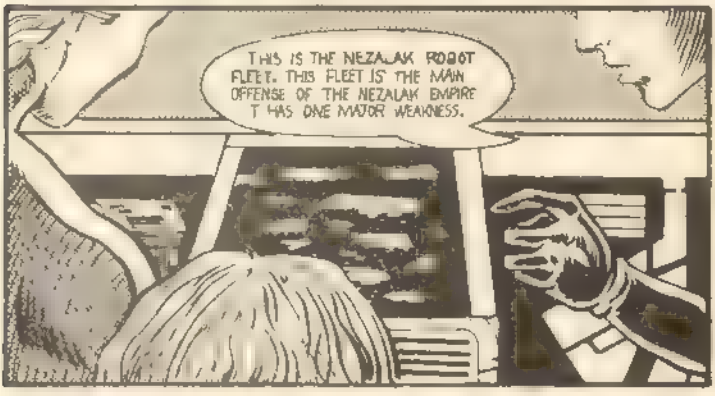
MY DEAR SIRS, YOU HAVE MISCONSTRUED MY MEANING HAVE GATHERED YOU, FOUR OF THE BEST PRIVATEERS THIS SIDE OF HALBALA TO SEE IF I MIGHT ENLIST YOUR AID TO


GO UP AGAINST THE NEZALAH EMPIRE!!? TOO RISKY.
SUICIDE
INTRIGUING
NOT WORTH IT
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE

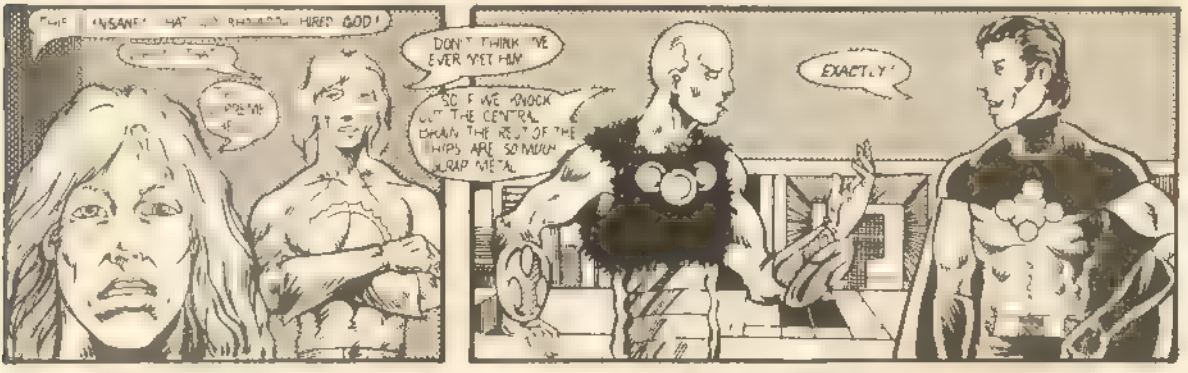
AGAIN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! THIS IS VIRTUALLY A HOLY CRUSADE TO FREE AN ENSLAVED PEOPLE! TO HALT THE SPREAD OF TYRANNY!
FORGET IT!
WE ARE NOT INTERESTED

BUT YOU'LL BE CONSIDERED INTERGALACTIC HEROES NOT CRIMINALS! SAVIOURS!! AS FOR PAYMENT . MY TREASURY IS YOURS TAKE WHAT YOU WI... TAKE IT ALL!
WEALTH!
FREEDOM
SAVIOUR
YEAH!

Yeah THIS'LL BE EASY. TAR ALEXUS SENDS US OUT AGAINST AN ENTIRE DAMN BATTLE FLEET


THIS IS THE NEZALAK ROBOT FLEET. THIS FLEET IS THE MAIN OFFENSE OF THE NEZALAK EMPIRE IT HAS ONE MAJOR WEAKNESS.

THIS IS THE CENTRAL BRAIN


DON'T THINK WE EVER MET HIM
EXACTLY!

THEN LET'S INVITE OUR

WOW! THIS BABY MANUEVERS LIKE A DREAM I'LL HAVE TO FIT UP THE ORBSTALKER WITH A DOZEN OF THESE.
FOR THE TIME BEING THIS LITTLE PLOY OF BEXT'S IS WORKING, HOPE THE OTHERS ARE DOING WELL.

DAWN!! AT NO ROCKET JOCKEY! THE PIRATE AND EARTH MAN ARE IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT. THIS IS JUST SLOWING ME DOWN
SO I JUST SHED MY METALLIC WINGS AND HANDLE THINGS MY WAY!
TWO CAN MY TAIL
MUST ADMIT, THIS DOES SEEM LIKE FUTILE EFFORTS FOUR AGAINST TEN THOUSAND?
I WONDER WHAT REQUIM'S SUPREME BEING WOULD DO?
12.

THE SHIPS RESPONSES ARE SLOW.... MANUVERABILTY HALVED! THAT LAST BLAST TOOM MUST HAVE DAMAGED HER WORSE THAN I THOUGHT!
I BETTER GET OUT OF HERE WHILE I'M STILL ABLE!
Whew! THAT WAS TOO CLOSE
MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DO MUCH DAMAGE WITHOUT MY SHIP
BUT I'M NOT OUT OF THIS GAME YET!
BEET'S VESSEL HASN'T BUDGED. I HOPE HE'S NOT HAVING SOME KIND OF
TROUBLE

THOSE FOOLS! WHAT COULD FOUR SHIPS HOPE TO ACHIEVE AGAINST THE IMPERIAL FLEETS PRIME FORCE?! HAH!
HUH? WHO
YOU WILL OPEN YOUR MIND TO ME. I HAVE NEED OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE
ALL IS GOING WELL THE CENTRAL CORE LY'S JUST A HEAD
ONLY THESE UNSUSPECTING FEW STAND BETWEEN ME AND THE CENTRAL CORE!
THERE! THE CORE IS SEALED OFF COMPLETELY BUT WE ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE AN ENTRANCE IS FORCED!
IT'S TIME SUMMON MY ALLIES
WHAT THE
WE'VE BEEN TRANSPORTED INTO THE CENTRAL BRAIN
WE COME BEST
14

TIME AND SPACE MELT, BECOMING BOTH AN INSTANT AND AN ETERNITY. REALITIES COLLIDE AS BEXT'S ESSENCE BECOMES ONE WITH THE MASSIVE COMPUTOR NETWORK THAT IS THE CENTRAL BRAIN. BLOOD AND BREATH ARE REPLACED BY THE DANCE OF ELECTRODES; FLESH WITH METAL ALLOYS.

FOR LONG MOMENTS THE MYSTIC IS LOST TO SENSATION. HIS MIND REELS, SCREAMS, AS HIS THOUGHTS, MEMORIES, HIS VERY ESSENCE SLIPS AWAY INTO OBLIVION

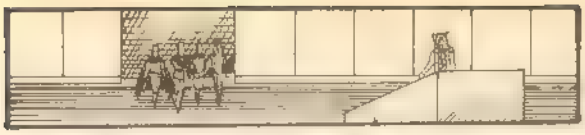
HE CAN FEEL THE SURGING ENERGY LIKE A LIVING THING, THROBBING, PULSING AS HE TURNS ROBOT VESSLE UPON VESSLE. HOLOCAUST!

THE ENERGY SINGS IN HIS EARS WHICH ARE NO MORE. THE SELF DIRECTED DESTRUCTION, THE WAR,. EXISTENCE, ARE BUT A FLEETING DREAM.

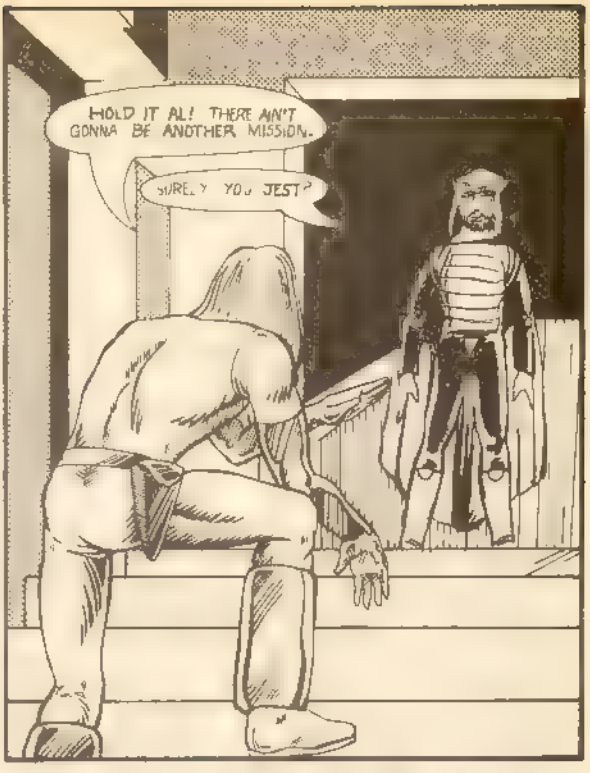
ON THE JOURNEY HOME THE THREE UNLIKELY COMRADES MARVEL AT THE SORCEROR'S ABILITIES. THEY WILL LONG REMEMBER THE ARCANE RITES THEY BEHELD WHILE ENGAGED IN BATTLE.

WORLDS WILL LONG WHISPER HOW FOUR MEN TURNED THE INVINCABLE NEZALAK FLEET UPON ITSELF IN A CARNAGE OF DESTRUCTION AND BY SOME MEANS SURVIVED TO TELL THE TALE.

FOR BEXT THERE ARE ONLY HAUNTING NIGHTMARES.



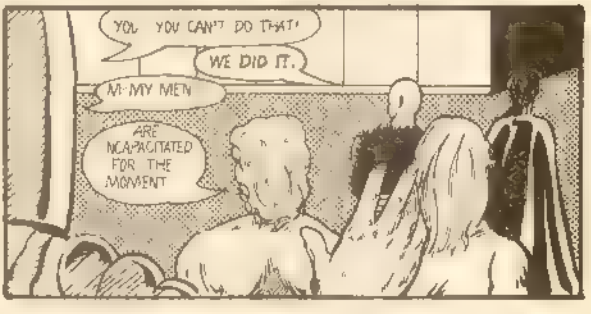
MY FRIENDS, THE WORD OF YESTERDAYS TRIUMPH OVER THE NEZALAK ROBOT FLEET IS ON THE LIPS OF EVERY BEING YAPISKI TO KALAB!
INCREDIBLE!! YOUR EFFECTIVENESS ASTONISHES EVEN ME.

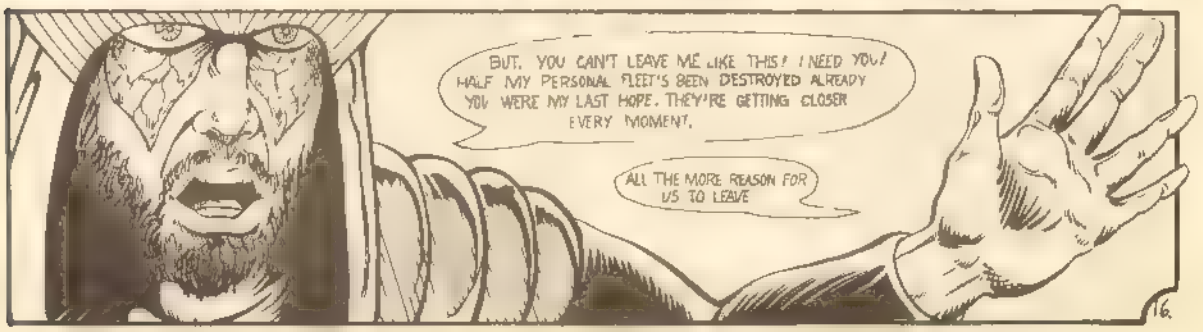

HOLD IT AL! THERE AIN'T GONNA BE ANOTHER MISSION.
SURELY YOU JEST?

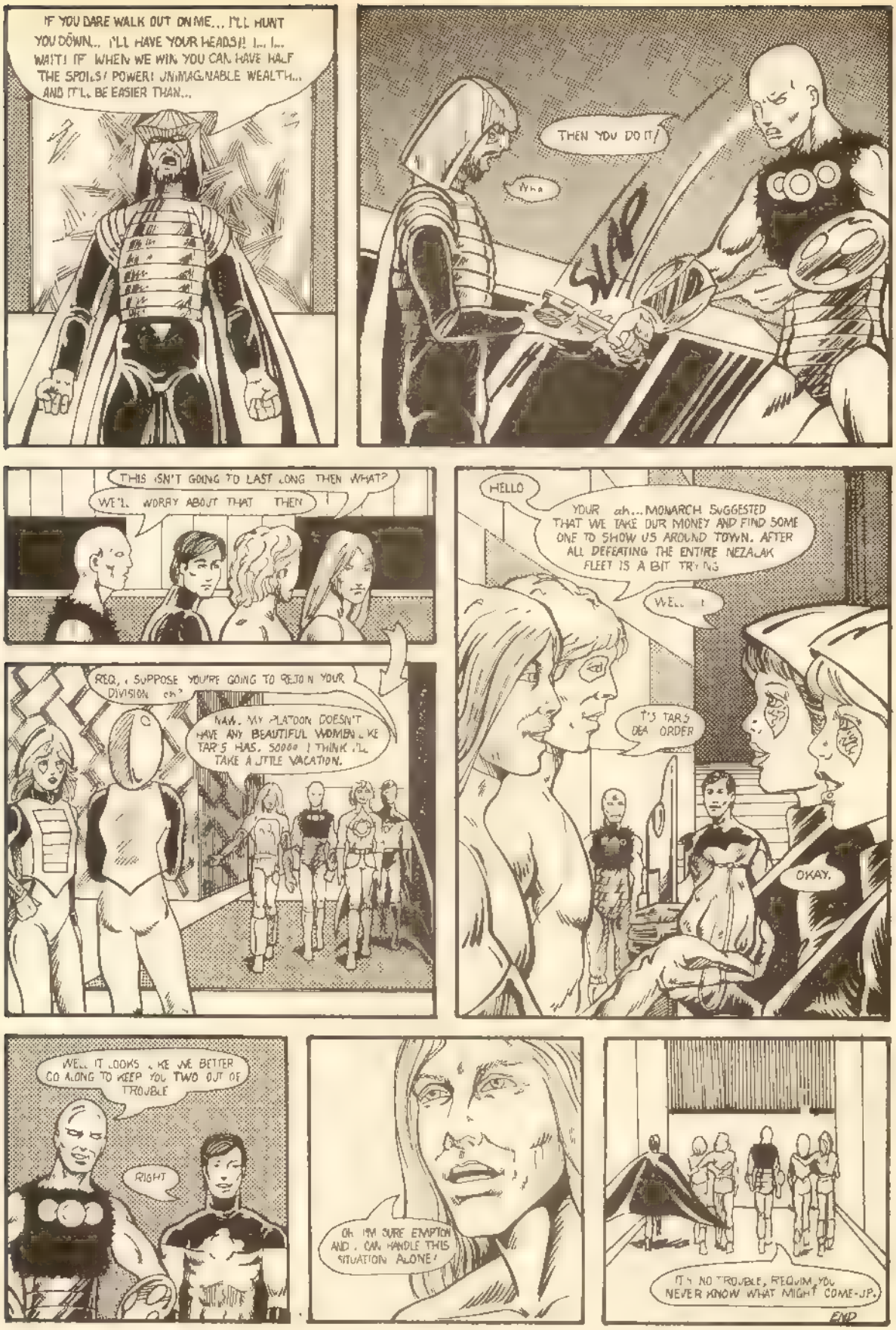
ASSURE YOU WE ARE MOST SERIOUS
DON'T UNDERSTAND

IT'S QUITE SIMPLE, FRIEND. ON THE WAY BACK SOME OF YOUR MEN ENLIGHTENED US ON YOUR FINANCIAL STATUS. YOUR TREASURY IS DEPLEATED. THIS CRUSADE IS RUN ON A SHOE STRING. YOU'RE INCREDIBLY OUTNUMBERED AND NOW WE'RE ALL HUNTED POLITICAL CRIMINALS NOT HEROES! AND I THOUGHT I WAS A GOOD CON-ARTIST! AM I MEAN

PERHAPS DID MISLEAD YOU A BIT, BUT
MISLED! WE WERE ALMOST KILLED!
SO WE'VE TAKEN THE FEW ROYAL BAUBLES YOU HAD LEFT AS COMPENSATION


YOU YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
WE DID IT.
M-MY MEN
ARE INCAPACITATED FOR THE MOMENT


BUT, YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS! I NEED YOU! HALF MY PERSONAL FLEET'S BEEN DESTROYED ALREADY YOU WERE MY LAST HOPE. THEY'RE GETTING CLOSER EVERY MOMENT.
ALL THE MORE REASON FOR US TO LEAVE


IF YOU DARE WALK OUT ON ME... I'LL HUNT YOU DOWN... I'LL HAVE YOUR HEADS!! I... I... WAIT! IF WHEN WE WIN YOU CAN HAVE HALF THE SPOILS! POWER! UNIMAGINABLE WEALTH... AND IT'LL BE EASIER THAN...
THEN YOU DO IT!
Nha
SWP
THIS ISN'T GOING TO LAST LONG THEN WHAT?
WE'LL WORRY ABOUT THAT THEN
REQ, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE GOING TO REJOIN YOUR DIVISION eh?
NAW. MY PLATOON DOESN'T HAVE ANY BEAUTIFUL WOMEN LIKE TARA'S HAS. SOOOO I THINK I'LL TAKE A LITTLE VACATION.
HELLO
YOUR ah... MONARCH SUGGESTED THAT WE TAKE OUR MONEY AND FIND SOME ONE TO SHOW US AROUND TOWN. AFTER ALL DEFEATING THE ENTIRE NEZALAK FLEET IS A BIT TRYING
WELL...
IT'S TARA'S IDEA ORDER
OKAY.
WELL IT LOOKS LIKE WE BETTER GO ALONG TO KEEP YOU TWO OUT OF TROUBLE
RIGHT
OH I'M SURE EMPTION AND I CAN HANDLE THIS SITUATION ALONE!
IT'S NO TROUBLE, REQUIM, YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT MIGHT COME-UP.
END

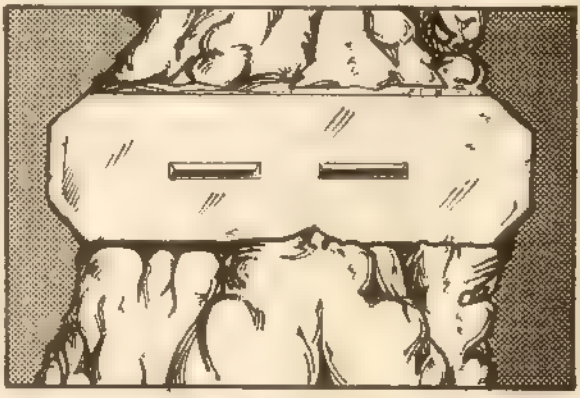
A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

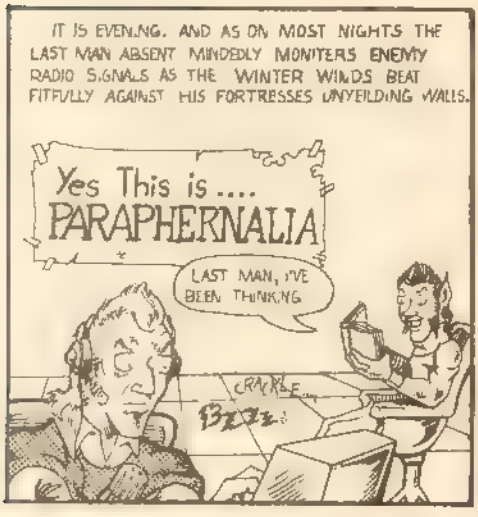
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY... BRIAN SIEMBIEDA
INKS AND LETTERS BY... KEVIN SIEMBIEDA

THE HANDS OF FATE HAVE WROUGHT THE SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION THROUGH AGES INNUMERABLE. OFTEN TIMES A WORD SPOKEN CARELESSLY IS OVER-HEARD AND A WORLD IS LAUNCHED INTO WAR. WHAT CAUSES A VEHICLE TO BREAK DOWN FORCING THE OCCUPANT TO SEEK ASSISTANCE IN THAT CERTAIN TAVERN, ONE OF DOZENS, JUST IN TIME TO OVER-HEAR ONE TOO DRUNK UTTER A FEW SYLLABLES, THAT AMONG COMRADES WOULD APPEAR HARMLESS AND GO UNNOTICED?

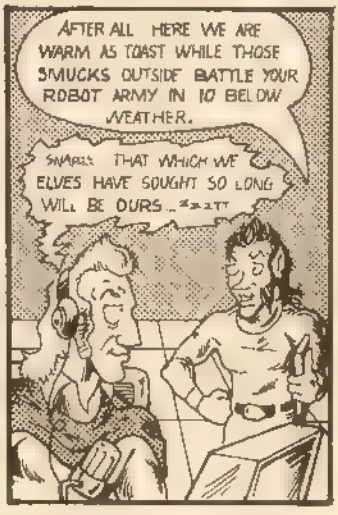
IS IT CHANCE? COINCIDENCE? OR A MAD GAME PLAYED BY MASTER CHESS PLAYERS?

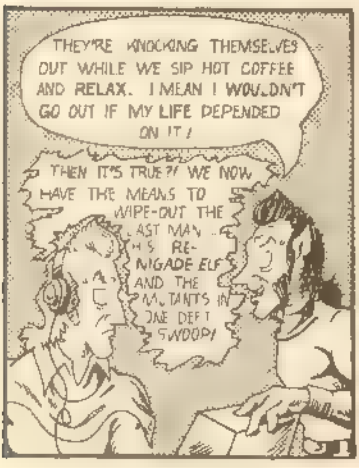
SUCH QUESTIONS POSE AN INTRIGUING PROBLEM AND SURELY SCHOLARS AND PHILOSOPHERS SHALL LONG PONDER IT BUT WHATEVER THE ANSWER FATE AGAIN IS AT PLAY, AS A FEW CARELESS WORDS ARE ONCE AGAIN OVERHEARD.

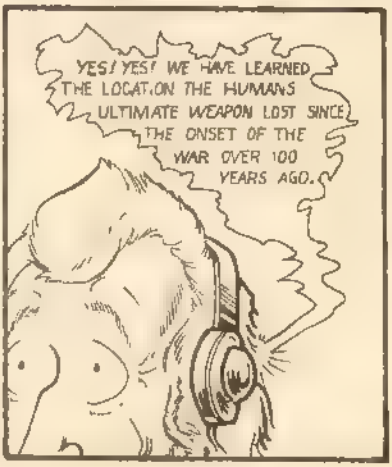



IT IS EVENING. AND AS ON MOST NIGHTS THE LAST MAN ABSENT MINDEDLY MONITERS ENEMY RADIO SIGNALS AS THE WINTER WINDS BEAT FITFULLY AGAINST HIS FORTRESSES UNYEILDING WALLS.
Yes This is.... PARAPHERNALIA
LAST MAN, I'VE BEEN THINKING
CRACKLE...
BZZZZ

Y'KNOW, EVEN THOUGH WE'RE OSTRACIZED, HATED AND LOATHED WE STILL HAVE IT PRETTY GOOD.
CRAKLE
RESEARCH TEAM 6 REPORTS... TOTAL SUCCESS BZZZZ


AFTER ALL HERE WE ARE WARM AS TOAST WHILE THOSE SMUCKS OUTSIDE BATTLE YOUR ROBOT ARMY IN 10 BELOW WEATHER.
SNARL THAT WHICH WE ELVES HAVE SOUGHT SO LONG WILL BE OURS...ZZZTT


THEY'RE KNOCKING THEMSELVES OUT WHILE WE SIP HOT COFFEE AND RELAX. I MEAN I WOULDN'T GO OUT IF MY LIFE DEPENDED ON IT!
THEN IT'S TRUE?! WE NOW HAVE THE MEANS TO WIPE-OUT THE LAST MAN HIS RE-NEGADE ELF AND THE MUTANTS IN ONE DEFT SWOOP!



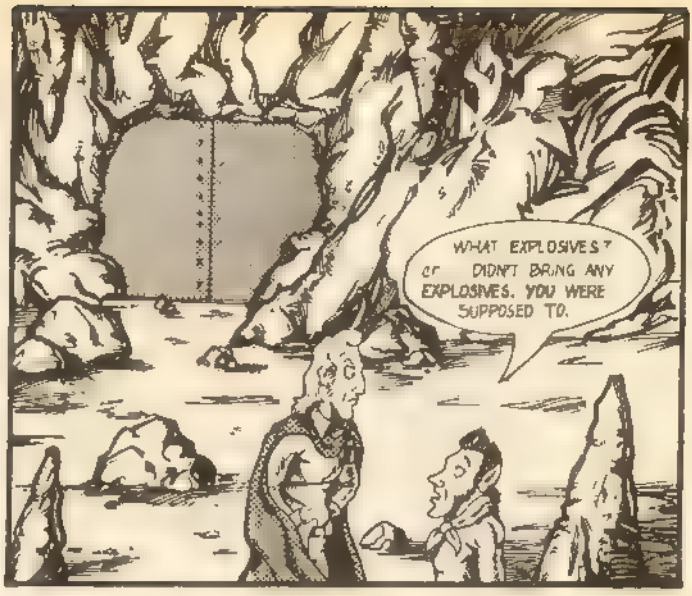
DEEP IN THE GRASSLANDS..
WELL WE'VE GAINED A SLIGHT LEAD. IT SEEMS THE ELF FORCES HAVE JUST BEGUN MOBILIZING.
NOW THAT WERE TAKING A BREAK. HOW ABOUT TELLING ME WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?!!
WE'RE IN A RACE TO GAIN WHAT WAS THE HUMAN RACES SECRET WEAPON.
IF IT WAS SO GREAT WHY WASN'T T USED?
THE DEVICE WAS IN THE AREA THAT WAS THE FIRST TARGET IN THE WAR, IT WAS BOMBED BEFORE WE EVEN KNEW WE WERE AT WAR. WE ASSUMED IT WAS DESTROYED.
WHAT'S .T DO
IT RENDERS ALL MECHANICAL DEVICES, EVEN GUNS, TOTALLY INOPERABLE!
GOOD LORD! =Choke=
ELSEWHERE.
WELL ELVES WE'RE FINALLY GONNA SEE SOME ACTION!
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
YAHOO!
SO WHERE ARE WE HEAD NG?
THE DOOM MOUNTAINS
DOOM MOUNTAINS?
AYE THE DOOM MOUNTAINS.
ONCE CALLED THE PARADISE MOUNTAINS, UNTIL IT BECAME THE FIRST TARGET IN OUR HOLY CRUSADE AGAINST THE TWIN DEMONS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF WHOM THE HUMANS LOVED AND NURTURED. WHERE 7 MILLION HUMANS DIED IN THE FIERY DOOM OF A ...A... THOUSAND ATOM BOMBS!
WHERE THE GHOST OF MEN CAN BE SEEN THROUGH THE RADIO-ACTIVE MISTS HOWLING CURSES TO THE MOON LIT SKIES, SWEARING REVENGE ON THE ELFIN TRIBES.
YES THE DOOM MOUNTAINS ONCE A THOUSAND SOLDIERS WANDERED IN YET ONLY THREE WHERE EVER SEEN ALIVE, BUT THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF DEAD!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN MOST OF THE MEN DESERTED!!!
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND T, SIR?
2

AT MUTANT HQ A THIRD PARTY BECOMES INVOLVED.
GENERAL OUR SCOUTS REPORT THAT THE LAST MAN IS ON THE PROWL TRAVELING BOTH NIGHT AND DAY TOWARD THE DOOM MOUNTAINS WITH A SMALL COMPANY OF ROBOTS. THE ELVES AREN'T FAR BEHIND.
Hhmmm!
THAT CONFIRMS MY SUSPICIONS THAT SOMETHING BIG IS HAPPENING FOR HE SELDOM GOES ABROAD IN WICKED WEATHER, ESPECIALLY IN ENEMY TERRITORY GO RALLY THE MEN, LACKEY. WE'RE GOING TO SHORT-CUT THROUGH THE SWAMP LANDS AND PREPARE A WARM WELCOME FOR OUR OLD PALS, AND CLAIM WHATEVER PRIZE THAT'S WAITING FOR WE MUTANTS!
LAST MAN! THE ELVES HAVE CAUGHT UP TO US!!
BLAM
ALL UNITS! FIRE NAPALM BOMBS!!
PHOOP
PHOOP
PHOOP!
GENERAL OUR FORCES ARE IN CHAOS. THE LAST MAN SET THE GRASSLANDS ABLAZE, KILLING DOZENS AND ROUTING THE REST. IT'LL TAKE HOURS TO REGROUP!
GRRRRR DELAYED FOR HOURS ALL BECAUSE HE STARTS A LITTLE FIRE!!
SNARL SNORT BOY THAT MAKES ME MAD!
BELIEVE ME SIR THE MEN FOUND IT ANNOYING ALSO

MEANWHILE .
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE TO WADE THROUGH THIS GIANT MUD PUDDLE IF WE EXPECT TO BEAT THE OTHERS.
SHLOPP!
SPLASH!
PLOP
PUFF PUFF WAIT A MINUTE. NOW I'M NOT SURE THIS IS THE RIGHT DIRECTION. LACKEY WADE OVER TO THAT SIGN. MAYBE WE'LL FIND OUT WHERE WE ARE.
YES SIR
GENERAL! I'M SINKING!
WELL, PULL YOURSELF UP, DUMMY!
I CAN'T! SUCTION IS TOO STRONG!
PUFF PUFF
OH MY GOD! IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ALL SINKING!
AH SHUT-UP! IT'S JUST YOUR IMAGINATION.
WELL LACKEY ARE WE LOST?
DANGER
BOTTOMLESS MUD LAKE
OR YOU MIGHT SAY THAT, SIR
4.

LEAVING THIS SOMEWHAT SOGGY SCENE WE SEE THAT OUR DARING, DYNAMIC, DASHING, AND DANDY DUO HAVE AT LAST REACHED THEIR DESTINATION IN THE DOOM MOUNTAINS.

WELL RENEGADE I'VE SEALED THIS CAVE AND POSTED THE ROBOTS AS GUARDS. WE'LL HAVE TO BLOW THE VAULT FAST. THE ELVES ARE ONLY ABOUT 15 MINUTES BEHIND US.
WE WOULD'VE BEEN HOURS AHEAD OF THEM IF YOU DIDN'T FORGET TO SET THE ALARM CLOCK LAST NIGHT!
SHADDUP, AND HAND ME THE EXPLOSIVES.

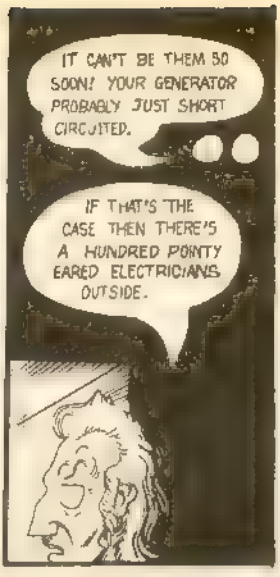


BRAT AT TAT POW KAPOW!
Ah... WELL, LAST MAN WE CAN'T GET INTO THE VAULT AND IT SOUNDS LIKE THE ELVES ARE BATTLING YOUR FEW ROBOTS. WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

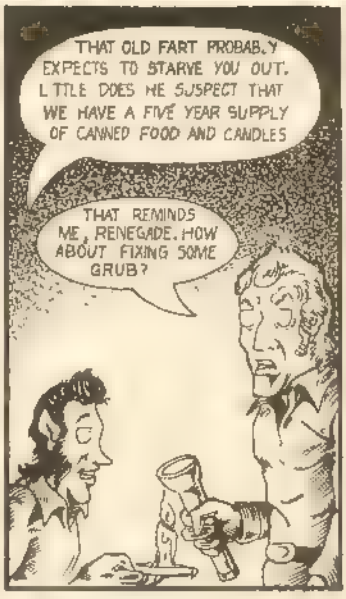
"GENERAL THE LAST MAN AND THE RENEGADE ELF HAVE SOMEHOW ELUDED OUR DRAGNET
AL. WE AN DO NOW BACK TO THE ...RESS AND WAIT
IT MATTERS LITTLE, AFTER ALL, WE HAVE THE PRIZE HE SO COVETED, WHICH PUTS HIM AT OUR MERCY.
LATER
Y'KNOW SIR? I WONDER WHAT THE LAST MAN'S DOING RIGHT NOW. AFTER ALL HE KNOWS WE HAVE THE MACHINE
I CAN TELL YOU WHAT HE'S DOING. HE'S FEARFULLY SITTING IN HIS FORTRESS AWAITING THE MOMENT WHEN THE MACHINES STOP AND HE FINDS HIMSELF ENTOMBED IN THAT GLORIFIED MAUSOLEUM!!
HE'S PACING NERVOUSLY KNOWING THAT SOON HE'LL BE ENSHROUDED IN DARKNESS! HIS BODY RACKED IN THE THROUGHS OF CLAUSTROPHOBIC TERROR!
I KNOW AT THIS VERY MOMENT HE IS CRINGING IN ABJECT FEAR FOR HIS LIFE!!
...OR SHOT!
6

CLICK!

WELL, RENEGADE, IT'S HAPPENED. THEY'VE ACTIVATED THE MACHINE.
IT IT CAN'T BE! NOT SO SOON!!
I'M GONNA LOOK OUT THE WINDOW.


IT CAN'T BE THEM SO SOON! YOUR GENERATOR PROBABLY JUST SHORT CIRCUITED.
IF THAT'S THE CASE THEN THERE'S A HUNDRED POINTY EARED ELECTRICIANS OUTSIDE.

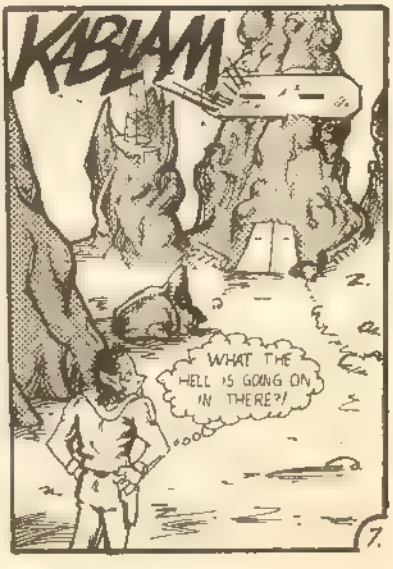
IT IS INDEED A SINISTER SIGHT WHICH MEETS OUR EYES. DUE TO THE ARCANE DEVICE FROM THE PAST THE ELVES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PENETRATE THE LAST MAN'S VIRTUALLY IMPREGNABLE DEFENSES TOTALLY UNMOLESTED AND HAVE MADE THEIR WAY TO HIS VERY STRONGHOLD.
HAH! TO HAVE COME THIS FAR WITHOUT A CASUALTY. ALL WE NEED DO NOW IS ALLOW HUNGER TO TAKE IT'S TOLL ON OUR OLD ENEMY


THAT OLD FART PROBABLY EXPECTS TO STARVE YOU OUT. LITTLE DOES HE SUSPECT THAT WE HAVE A FIVE YEAR SUPPLY OF CANNED FOOD AND CANDLES
THAT REMINDS ME, RENEGADE. HOW ABOUT FIXING SOME GRUB?

SURE PASS THE ELETRIC CAN-OPENER.
OHH, IT DOESN'T WORK NOW.
OH THAT'S RIGHT. WELL, YOU MUST HAVE THE KIND YOU WORK BY HAND
er...I...I NEVER THOUGHT I NEEDED ONE.

AN AXE!! SURELY YOU HAVE A FIRE-AXE!!!
IN A TOTALLY FIREPROOF STEEL AND CONCRETE? FORTRESS?

OH MY GOD!! WE'LL STARVE! WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?!!
I KNOW! QUICK GET THE BLASTING CAPS!


KABLAM
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON IN THERE?!

HOLD IT THERE
YOU'RE NOT DONE EXPLAINING
DO YOU REALIZE THAT ALL THE MACHINES IN THE WORLD HAVE STOPPED? THAT THAT PEOPLE EVIL HAS WROUGHT UNTOLD DAMAGE TO OUR NATION!
YOU CAN'T SHOOT ME FOR THAT.
GIVE ME THE TIME I NEEDED TO STUDY THE MACHINE. BESIDES, YOUR GUN DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE
GUARDS!!
NO! WAIT! STOP!!
CRASH
BAM!
STOP!
OH MY GOD!! IS... IS IT BROKEN? IS IT STILL WORKING?!
WELL
THAT THREE GUESSES
WELL LAST MAN THE LIGHTS JUST CAME BACK ON. Y'KNOW
YEAH. WE BLEW UP 63 CANNED HAMS FOR NOTHING.
END

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To witness the opening of two films such as STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND within less than a year is something in the nature of a miracle. But apparently, some people can't accept a miracle at face value, I suppose, because certain members of the science fiction literati are crawling out from beneath their assorted rocks protesting that WARS and ENCOUNTERS (I refuse to abbreviate the last as CE3K like everyone else — it is the sort of pop neologism that gave birth to that moronic term "sci-fi" — and when spoken sounds an awful lot like a certain droid we all know and love which has nothing at all to do with ENCOUNTERS) are not good science fiction. Asimov calls WARS brainless entertainment, reciting the notorious sequence where Han Solo erroneously describes "parsec" as a measure of speed rather than distance (Asimov evidently wasn't aware that WARS' writer/director George Lucas purposely used that line, conscious of its scientific inaccuracy to establish that Solo was a con artist — a characterization technique that Asimov doesn't seem to be familiar with), Ted White agrees, and in the March edition of *Starlog*, editor Howard Zimmerman says about ENCOUNTERS: "Spielberg [ENCOUNTERS' writer/director] had the chance to expose the public to the meat and heart of SF — and he blew it." I imagine these people expected the hard core scientific saturation of unbending realism that made "2001" (save for the final sequences) such a crashing bore

(Background music, a romantic concept diametrically opposed to naturalism, is unrealistic, too. But who complains about it?)

In the same issue of *Starlog*, publisher O'Quinn boasts that the revered attentions of sf fans would be fought over tooth-and-nail by producers — and that fans can be choosy. *He* has a lotta hope!

At press time, the fan jury seems to be in deadlock over WARS, and for ENCOUNTERS the trial is only beginning But if the above comments represent the typical anthracite mentality of that berserk species known as the fan, then the verdict will unquestionably be thumbs down.

Why? In the view of the fanatical fan massmind WARS and ENCOUNTERS do not conform to the standards of classic *Analog* type science fiction, as set down by the ancient (and frequently unreadable) tomes of the Grand Ole Masters of the genre like Asimov and White.

Whatever their sentence, no one need heed it. The public will go to see WARS because they want romantic escapism and ENCOUNTERS because they need romantic humanism — and they will judge these films on their own merits, not as "science fiction" because someone said to judge them as such. They will not go to see el cheapo trash like "Starship Invasions" because they can recognize a popularity ripoff when they smell one (the ripoff being all the more blatant when one realizes what difficulty the producers experienced when trying to decide whither to call their celluloid mess "Starship Invastons" or "Alien Encoun ter " and finally releasing it as the former since WARS had proven its appeal while ENCOUNTERS had yet to be screened). Small wonder Lucas and Steven Spielberg refuse to degrade their masterpieces by labeling them as "sci-fi."

But, if people don't go to see WARS and ENCOUNTERS because they are science fiction, then *why* do they flood the box offices? Why the enormous response, the critical acclaim?

STAR WARS is an unabashed romantic fantasy that makes no apologies for itself. It is entirely proper that Lucas calls WARS a "space fantasy" in the same manner that WARS' inspiration, "Flash Gordon" was

A *romantic fantasy*: meaning, Lucas wanted to create characters that were larger than life, exaggerating traits and beliefs that exist in all of us, magnified to the nth degree. From this aspect, WARS could have been another remake of The Three Musketeers, or a Western shoot-em-up.

But Lucas wanted to inject a sense of wonder and a sensation of majesty and power that science fiction hardware could afford and still not strain one's suspension of disbelief. Thus, we see gigantic starships that inspire far more awe

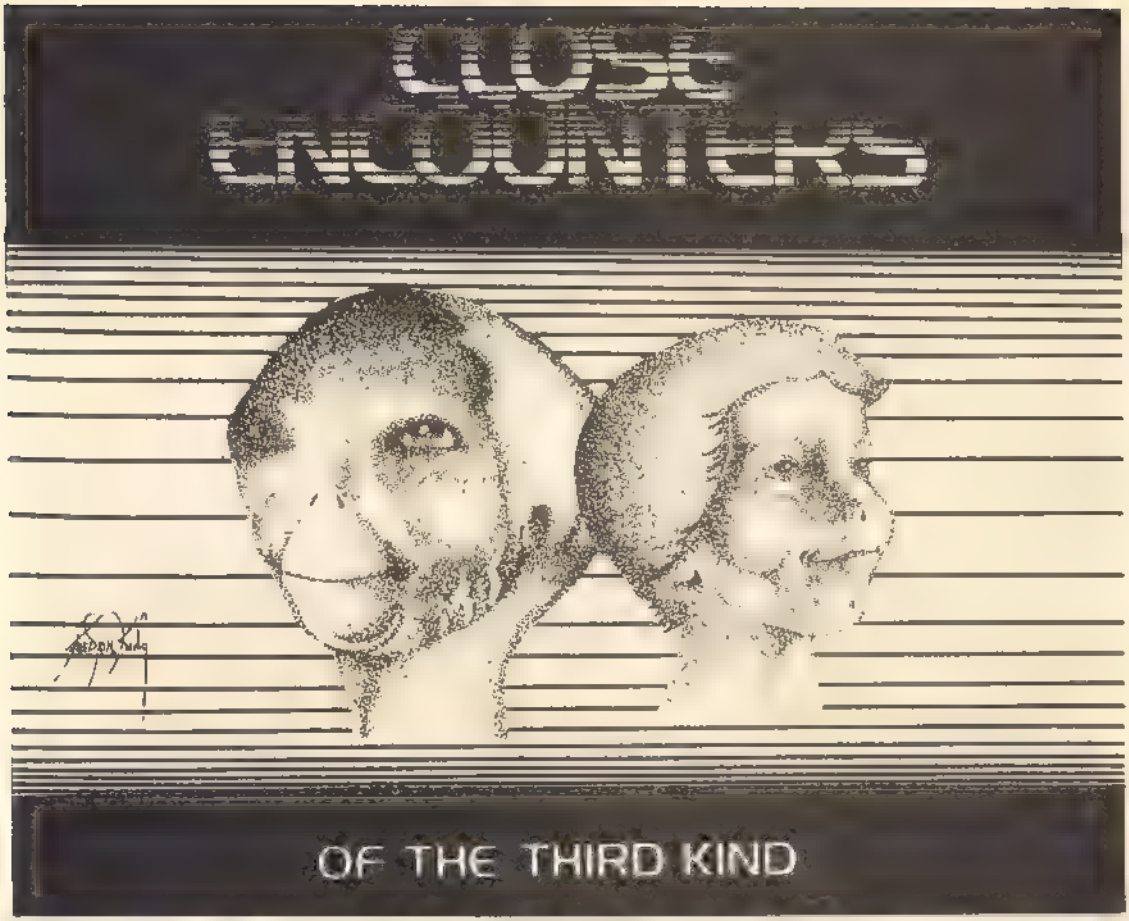
than any marine battleship; we watch true heroes dueling the enemy not with clanging swords of clumsy steel but with flashing light sabres of lethal luminosity, we marvel at one-man ships dogfighting in the sky, only the sky is space and the ships are traveling at near light-speed and firing deadly laser bolts instead of machine-guns as they hurtle through a narrow trench to save not some island, but an entire planet in a white-knuckle race against time. We laugh at the characters getting drunk or playing poker in the cantina because the patrons are a bizzare assortment of aliens. We listen to an old man with the wisdom of a wizard and the mysticism of a Zen monk lecture a young boy who wants greater things than dusting crops and we have a princess who is also a senator and takes organic fertilizer from no man! — as well as a squad commander who sends his men out on a suicide mission not with a simple "may God go with you," but an eloquent "May the Force be with you."

There are cut & dried black and white absolutes with respective characters — the utterly vile Darth Vader, a villain so steeped in evil that milk curdles in his presence Yet, Vader is a foe an opponent can respect, a worthy adversary who is pitted against Obi-Wan Kenobi, an ancient and noble Jedi knight, kindly enough to offer an antagonistic extraterrestrial a drink but does not lack an iron nerve and won't hesitate to take a light sabre to your throat if you're foolish enough to invoke his wrath

You know who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. You know who to shout "boo!" at (the "Darth Vader Lives" sect notwithstanding) and who to cheer for — a neccessary and welcome relief during a day when people see the world as a series of hesitant shades of gray and cannot hold sight of a single conviction for more than the span of thirty seconds

While STAR WARS is a film of high adventure in the grand fashion, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND is a quasi-romantic manifestation of high drama. Spielberg created a story blending humanism with the "first contact" theme — a dramatic phenomenon in itself. Richard Dreyfuss portrays the "mildly" eccentric but believeably Roy Neary. Melinda Dillon takes the role of Jillian

(Continued On Next Page)



Guiler, whose child is abducted by a UFO. Spielberg was expecially wise in casting Dillon for this part because of her subtle acting and earthy beauty. He could as easily pandered to the sexual urgings of the audience and supplied a plastic femme fatale — but such a move would have reduced a vital part of the film to cheap commercial explotation and detract from the pathos of the drama.

Unlike Kubrick, Spielberg did not choose a science fiction writer like Clarke as consultant — he chose J. Allen Hynek (remember him, UFO buffs? He's the one who expounded the famous "swamp gas" theory as a possible explanation to UFO sightings during the days of Project Bluebook), the world's acknowledged expert of Ufology. The film is spiced by facual information: eyewitnesses finding themselves sunburned after UFO enocunters, clouds encloaking UFOs like screens, and even the WWII plane La Combe discovers had a basis in fact — during the war a squadron of such planes disappeared without a trace

Aside from the accuracy of conveying these events to film, the most important and pervading influence of ENCOUNTERS is a sense of *benevolence* — a warm glowing benevolence that surrounds the story from the moment when an elderly man holds up a sign inviting the aliens to "Stop and be friendly" to the triumphant climax as the aliens finally greet humanity at Devil's Tower with a dazzling display of brilliant aerodynamics and the magnificent appearance and landing of the spectacular mother ship to that beautiful alien's smile that reminds one of the first awkward smile of an infant.

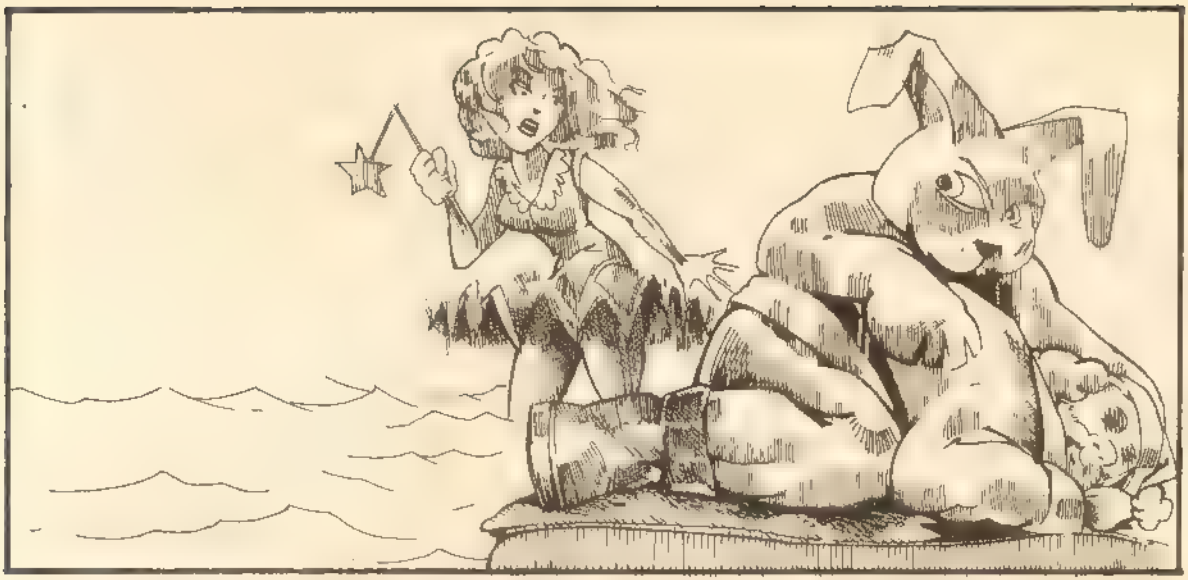
It has been written that Spielberg had a responsibility to create a science-fiction movie rather than what he calls a "science speculation" film (so sayeth Zimmerman) These critics can stick it. Spielberg, as well as Lucas, had an obligation to the people who supported them, as well as themselves and they fulfilled that obligation. They have both fought the good fight and won. Lucas had shown me how to dream great dreams again, and Spielberg has shown me how to feel benevolence towards my fellow human being during a time when my patience and tolerance be sorely tested (I can now even forgive him for "Jaws"). And from where I stand, peering out the window of an ivory tower that overlooks a wasteland of mediocrity, the dismal landscape has been brightened a bit by the sudden appearance of two new stars

Special thanks to Wyma & Assoc. for final typesetting, layout, and photography of this column

ARC

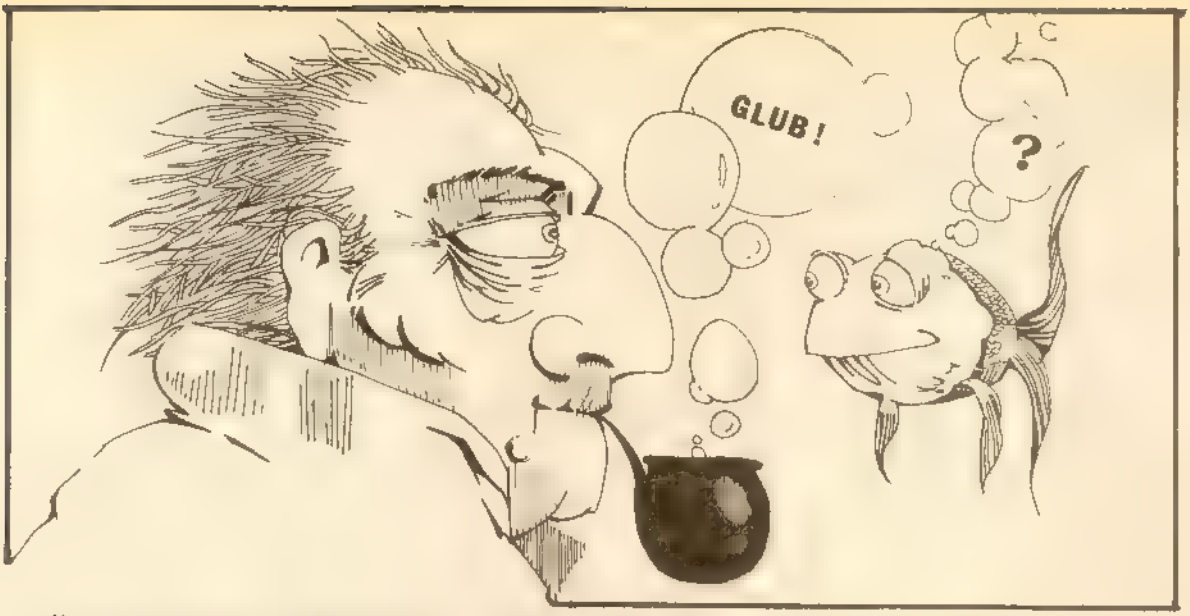
On October 35th, Fooften Hunred and Four, the world ended. The rains came again like they always did after every millinieum when things didn't quite work out. Telephones, televisions, and radios stopped. People stopped too. Lots of people.

© 1977 James Dombrowski



Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, and Tooth Fairy all disappeared. No one noticed.

All the dreams of a lifetime died that night. Nightmares died too.



"And so the world will feel the wrath of the all powerful Father, Mo. The storms will rage and things will get wet. Really wet." 11 : 32

Another civilization is swept away to be forever obscured in the anals of history. Now the waves slowly beat off the rocks, as the sun goes down again and again on the dead carcass of the earth.

Ahem!

Fortunately for our story, not all perished in this hasty holocaust. From out of the bowels of the Sharpe Sea emerges our first glimpse of a certified survivor---

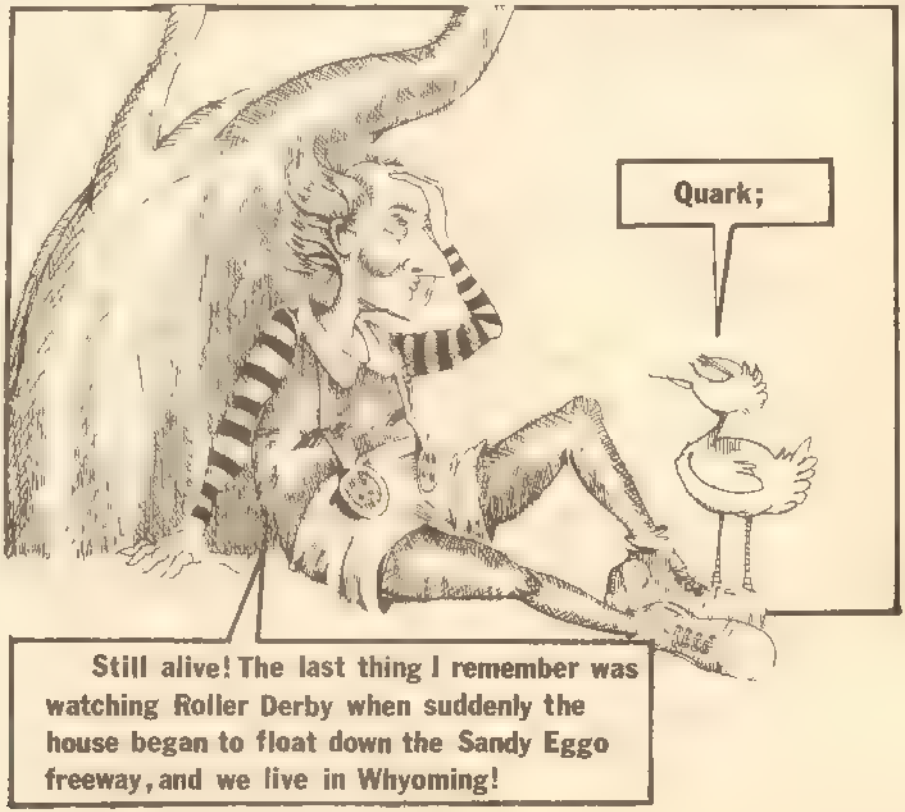
*The part of Thurmond Sturgeon the podiatric praematurus, is being portrayed by Geoffrey Danube, and will appear sporadically throughout the strip to remind us of our ancestral heritage. -author's note

Soon more creatures surfaced upon this island Arc, where Thurmond and other chosen organisms of Mo's menagerie are dramatically destined to dwell indefinitely in hopeful harmony.

But they are not alone! For now sitting idly under a tree they spotted what at first glance re-sembled a soggy loaf of pumper-nickel:

MAN*

*(Heusen Van Wrinkle)

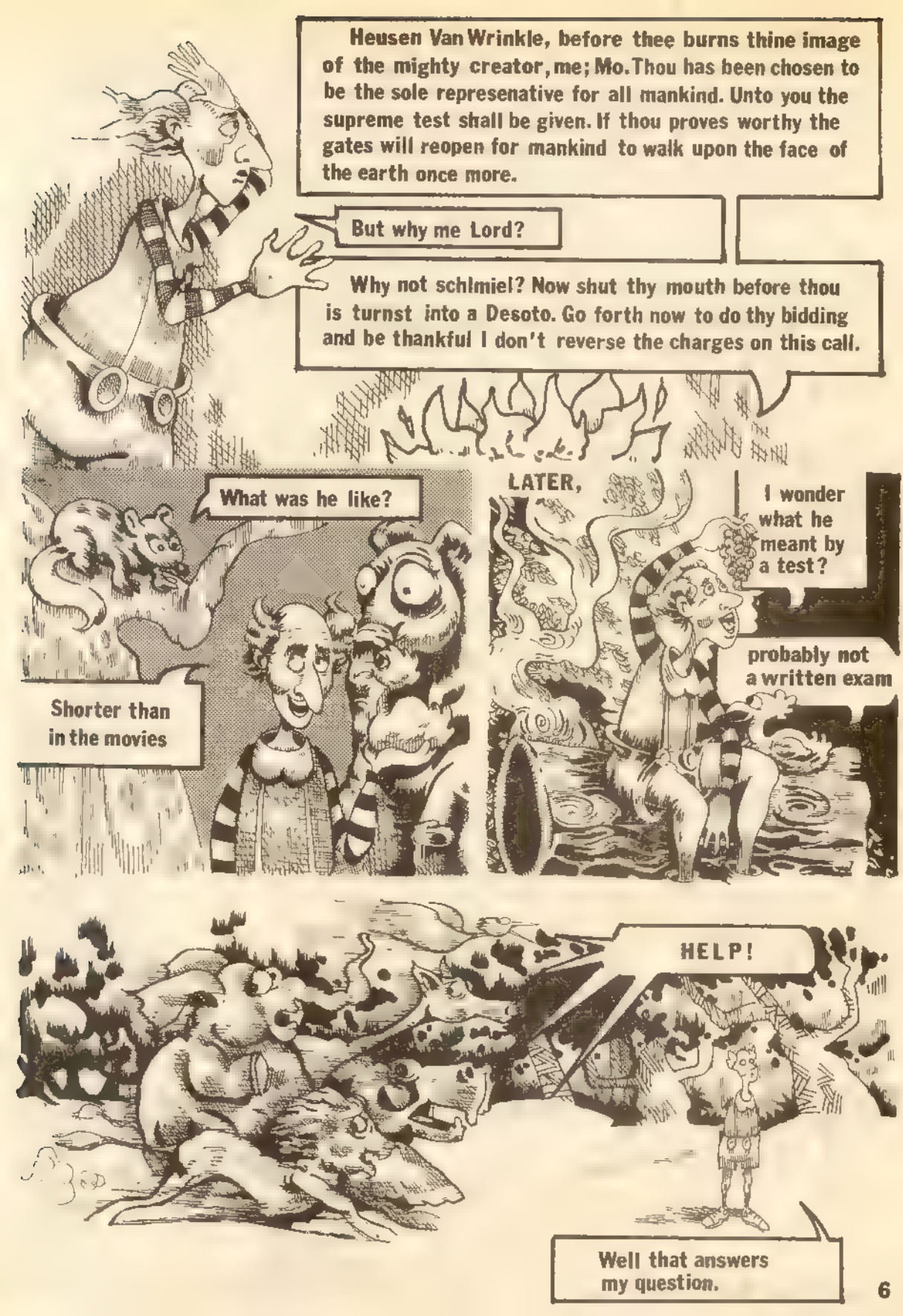

Quark;
Still alive! The last thing I remember was watching Roller Derby when suddenly the house began to float down the Sandy Eggo freeway, and we live in Whyoming!

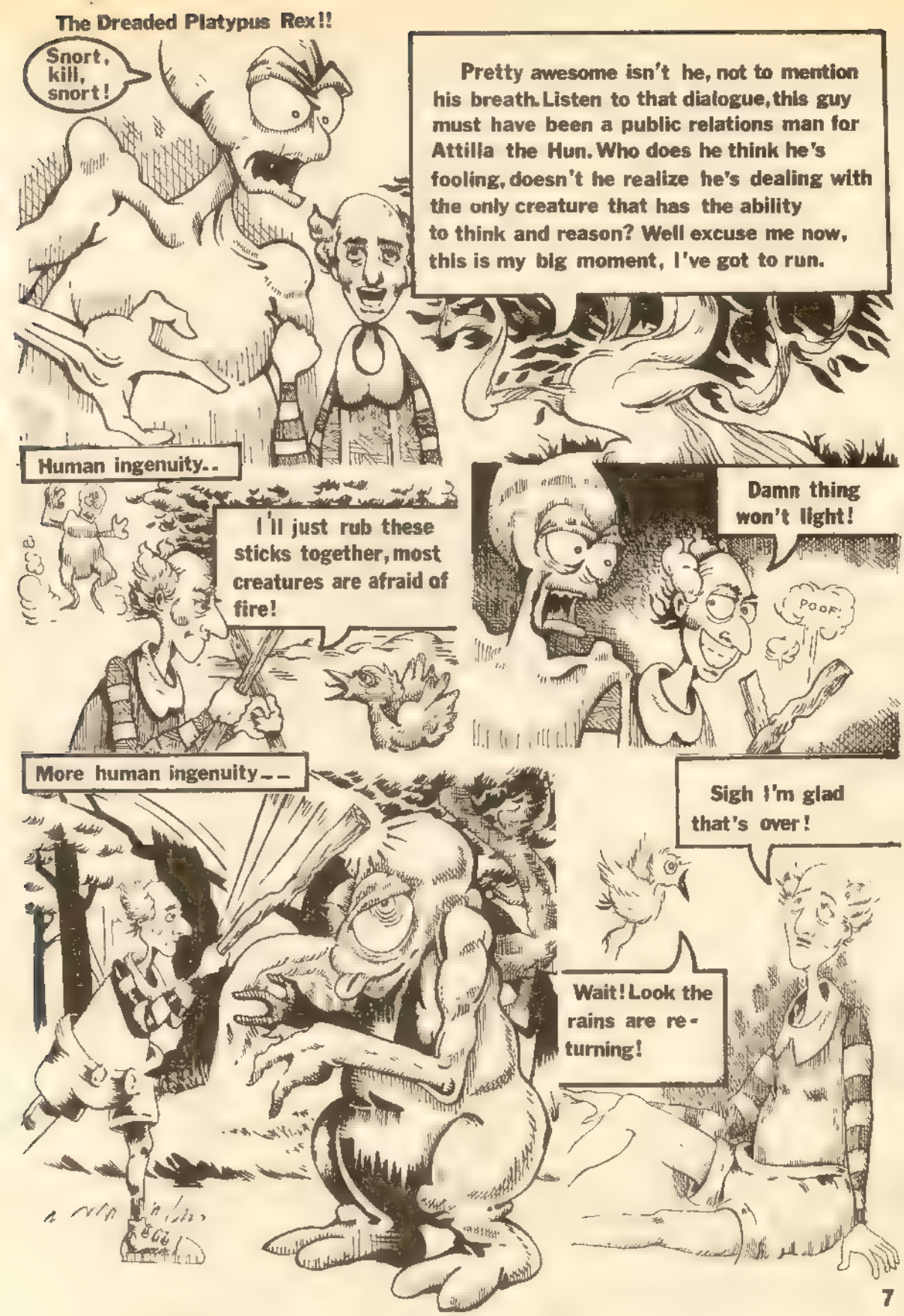
Man was gentle and harmless.

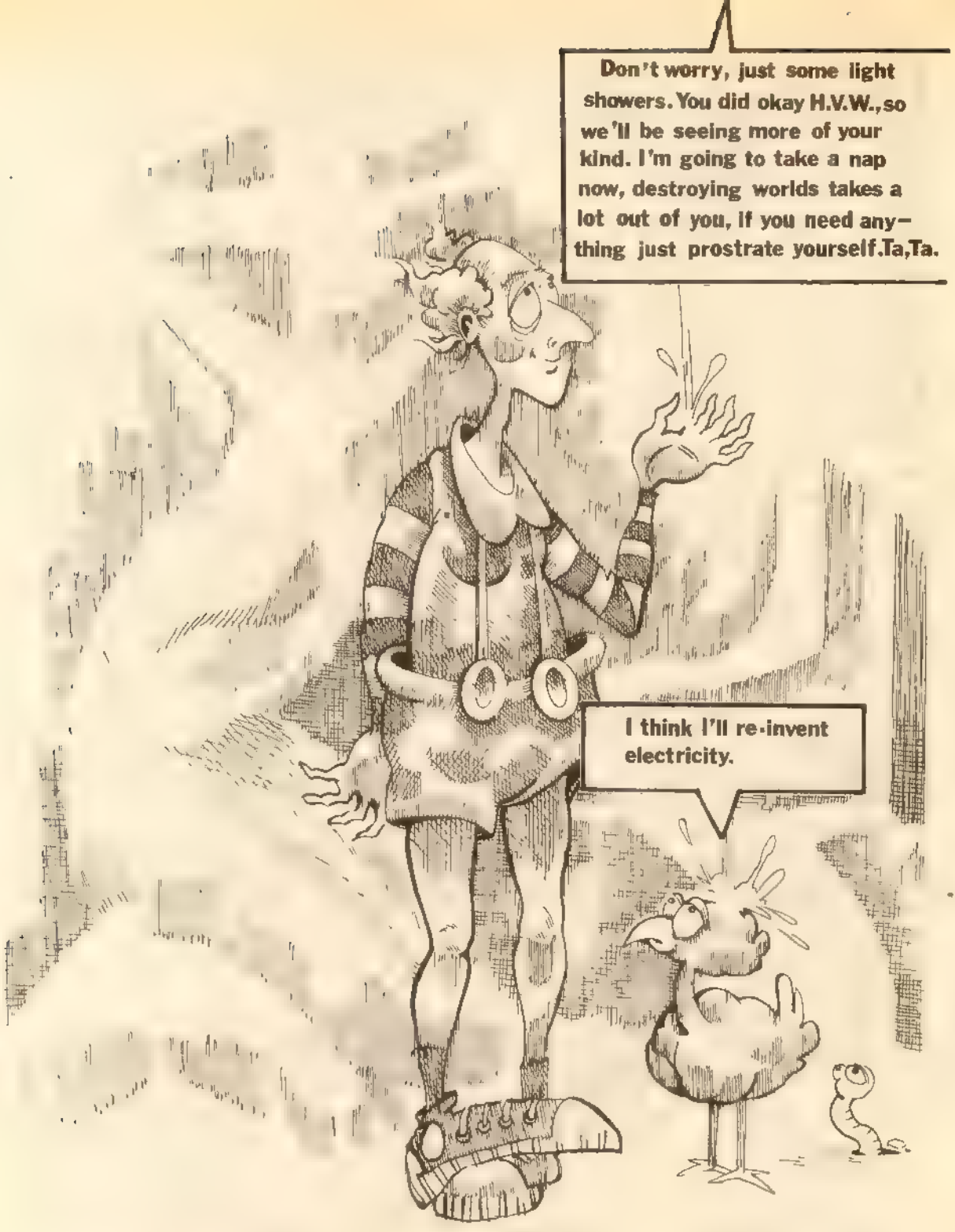
But he was here for a reason.

...And my third wife was a great cook, in the evenings after dinner we would sit by the fire and she would let me lick her spoons...
Z,z,z
Yawn

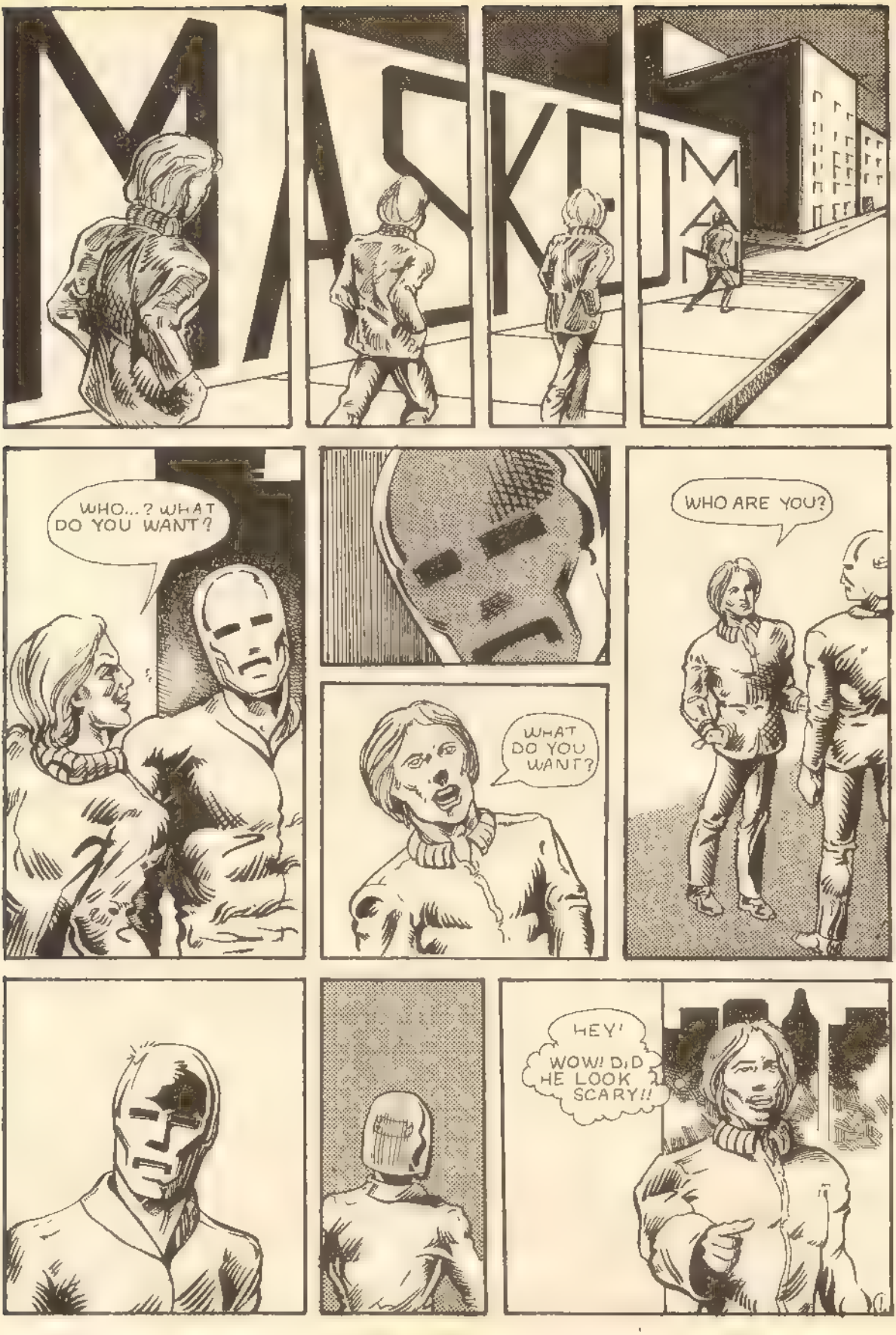
Man was also an idiot.

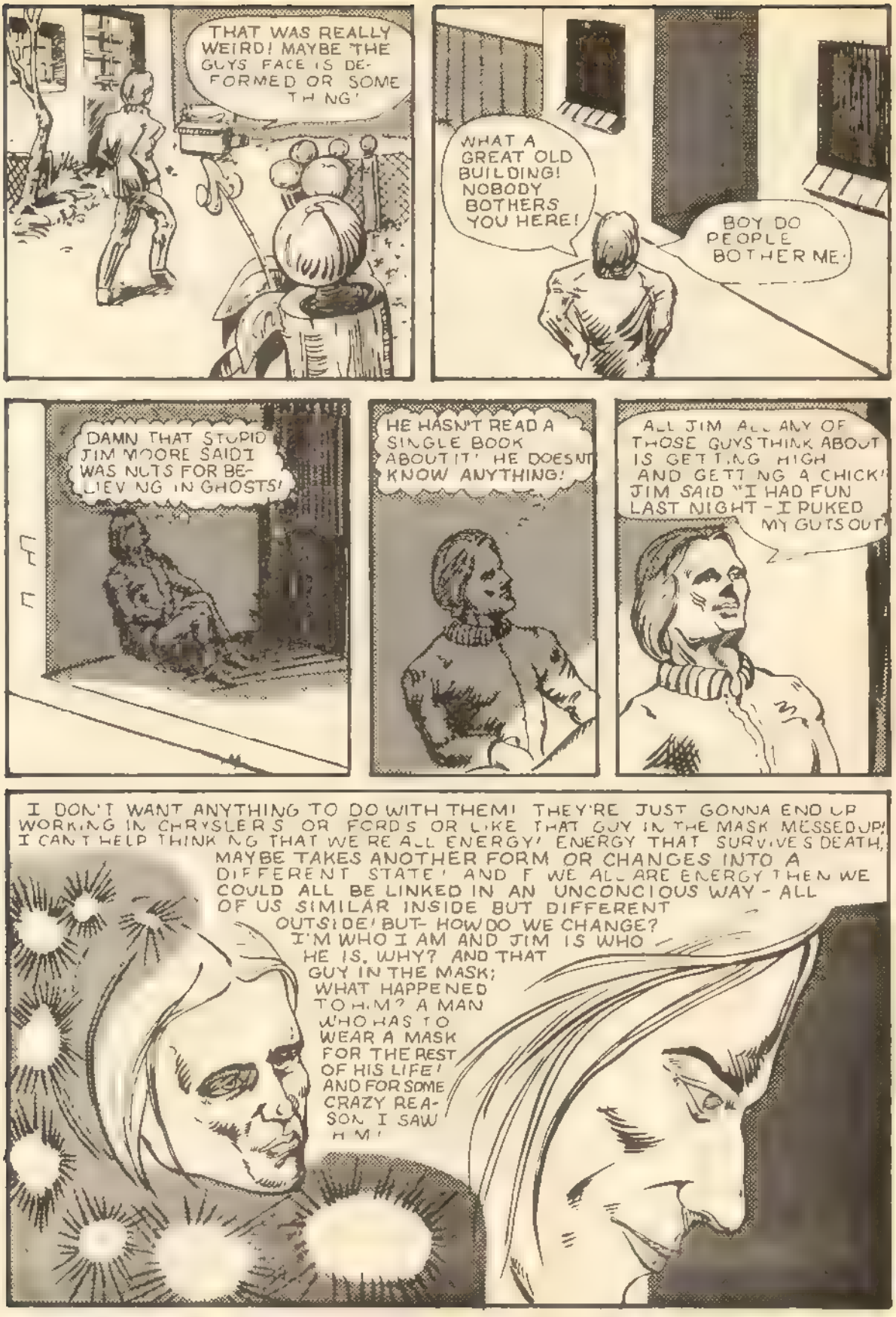

Heusen Van Wrinkle, before thee burns thine image of the mighty creator, me; Mo. Thou has been chosen to be the sole represenative for all mankind. Unto you the supreme test shall be given. If thou proves worthy the gates will reopen for mankind to walk upon the face of the earth once more.
But why me Lord?
Why not schlmiel? Now shut thy mouth before thou is turnst into a Desoto. Go forth now to do thy bidding and be thankful I don't reverse the charges on this call.
What was he like?
Shorter than in the movies
LATER,
I wonder what he meant by a test?
probably not a written exam
HELP!
Well that answers my question.

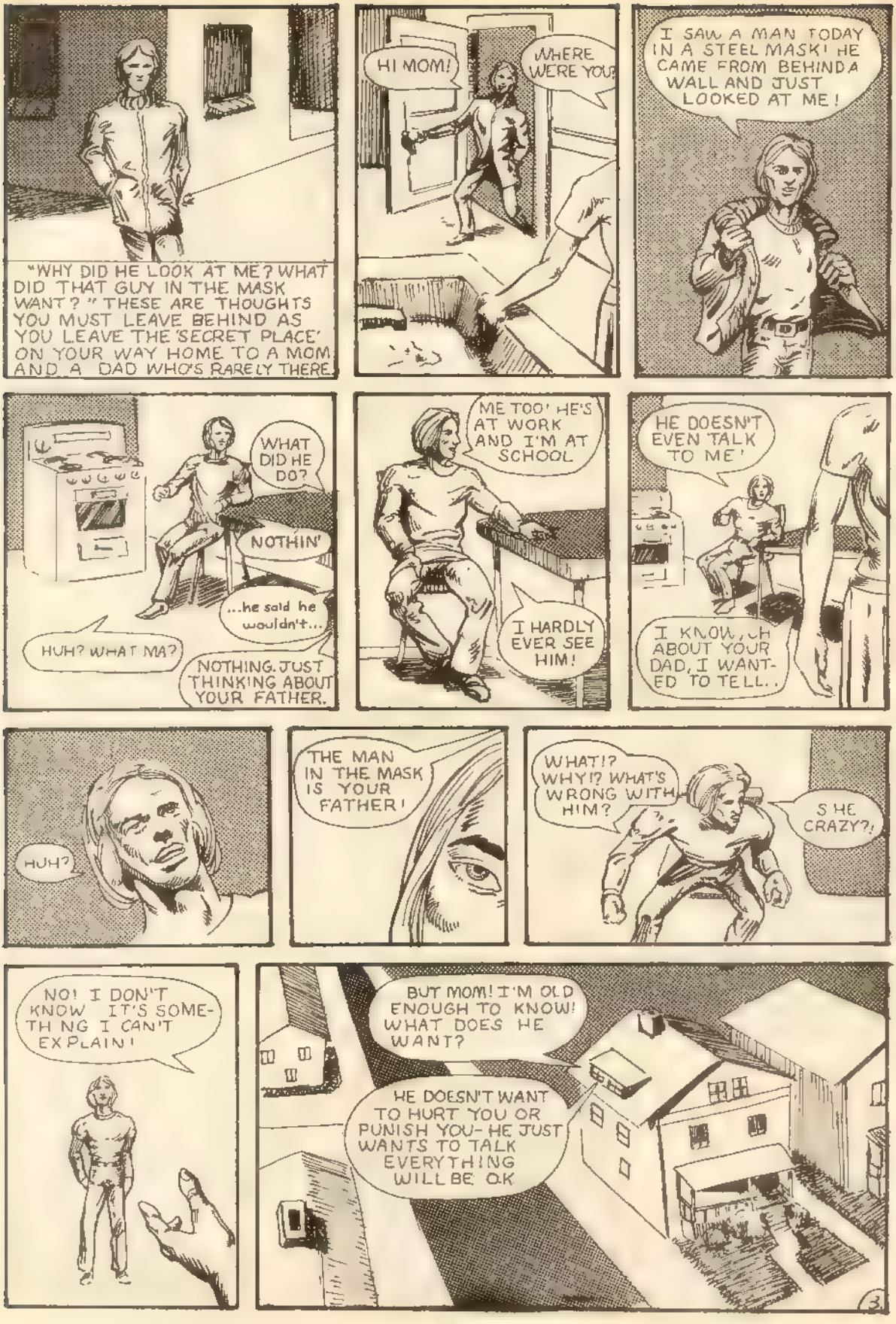

The Dreaded Platypus Rex!!
Snort, kill, snort!
Pretty awesome isn't he, not to mention his breath. Listen to that dialogue, this guy must have been a public relations man for Attilla the Hun. Who does he think he's fooling, doesn't he realize he's dealing with the only creature that has the ability to think and reason? Well excuse me now, this is my big moment, I've got to run.
Human ingenuity..
I'll just rub these sticks together, most creatures are afraid of fire!
Damn thing won't light!
POOF
More human ingenuity--
Sigh I'm glad that's over!
Wait! Look the rains are re-turning!


Don't worry, just some light showers. You did okay H.V.W., so we'll be seeing more of your kind. I'm going to take a nap now, destroying worlds takes a lot out of you, if you need anything just prostrate yourself. Ta,Ta.
I think I'll re-invent electricity.

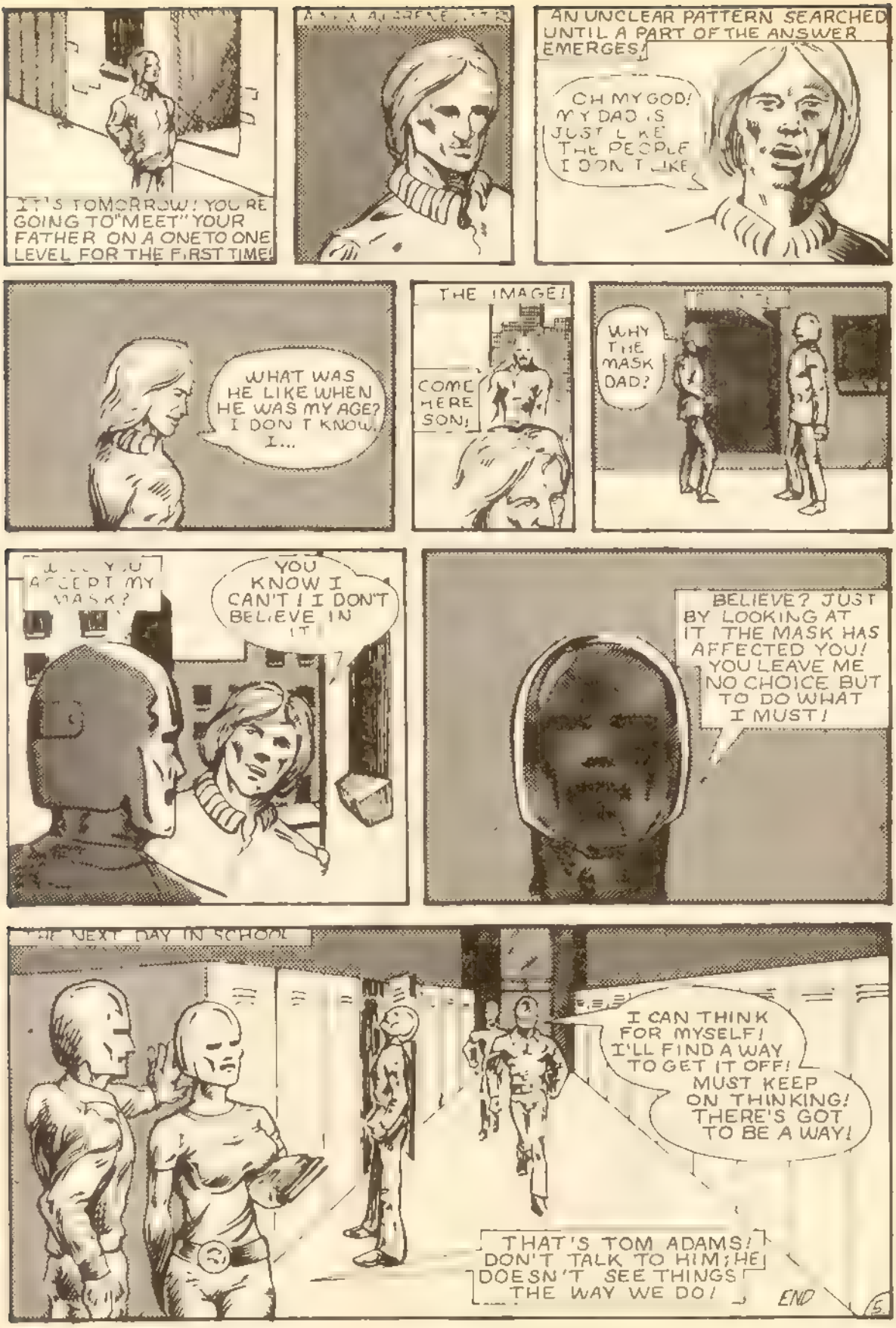
END...


MASK
WHO...? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WHO ARE YOU?
HEY!
WOW! DID HE LOOK SCARY!!


THAT WAS REALLY WEIRD! MAYBE THE GUYS FACE IS DE-FORMED OR SOME TH NG!
WHAT A GREAT OLD BUILDING! NOBODY BOTHERS YOU HERE!
BOY DO PEOPLE BOTHER ME.
DAMN THAT STUPID JIM MOORE SAID I WAS NUTS FOR BE-LIEV NG IN GHOSTS!
HE HASN'T READ A SINGLE BOOK ABOUT IT' HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING!
ALL JIM ALL ANY OF THOSE GUYS THINK ABOUT IS GETT NG HIGH AND GETT NG A CHICK! JIM SAID "I HAD FUN LAST NIGHT - I PUKED MY GUTS OUT!
I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM! THEY'RE JUST GONNA END UP WORK NG IN CHRYSLERS OR FORDS OR LIKE THAT GUY IN THE MASK MESSED UP! I CAN'T HELP THINK NG THAT WE RE ALL ENERGY! ENERGY THAT SURVIVES DEATH, MAYBE TAKES ANOTHER FORM OR CHANGES INTO A DIFFERENT STATE! AND F WE ALL ARE ENERGY THEN WE COULD ALL BE LINKED IN AN UNCONCIOUS WAY - ALL OF US SIMILAR INSIDE BUT DIFFERENT OUTSIDE! BUT- HOW DO WE CHANGE? I'M WHO I AM AND JIM IS WHO HE IS. WHY? AND THAT GUY IN THE MASK; WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? A MAN WHO HAS TO WEAR A MASK FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE! AND FOR SOME CRAZY REA-SON I SAW H M!

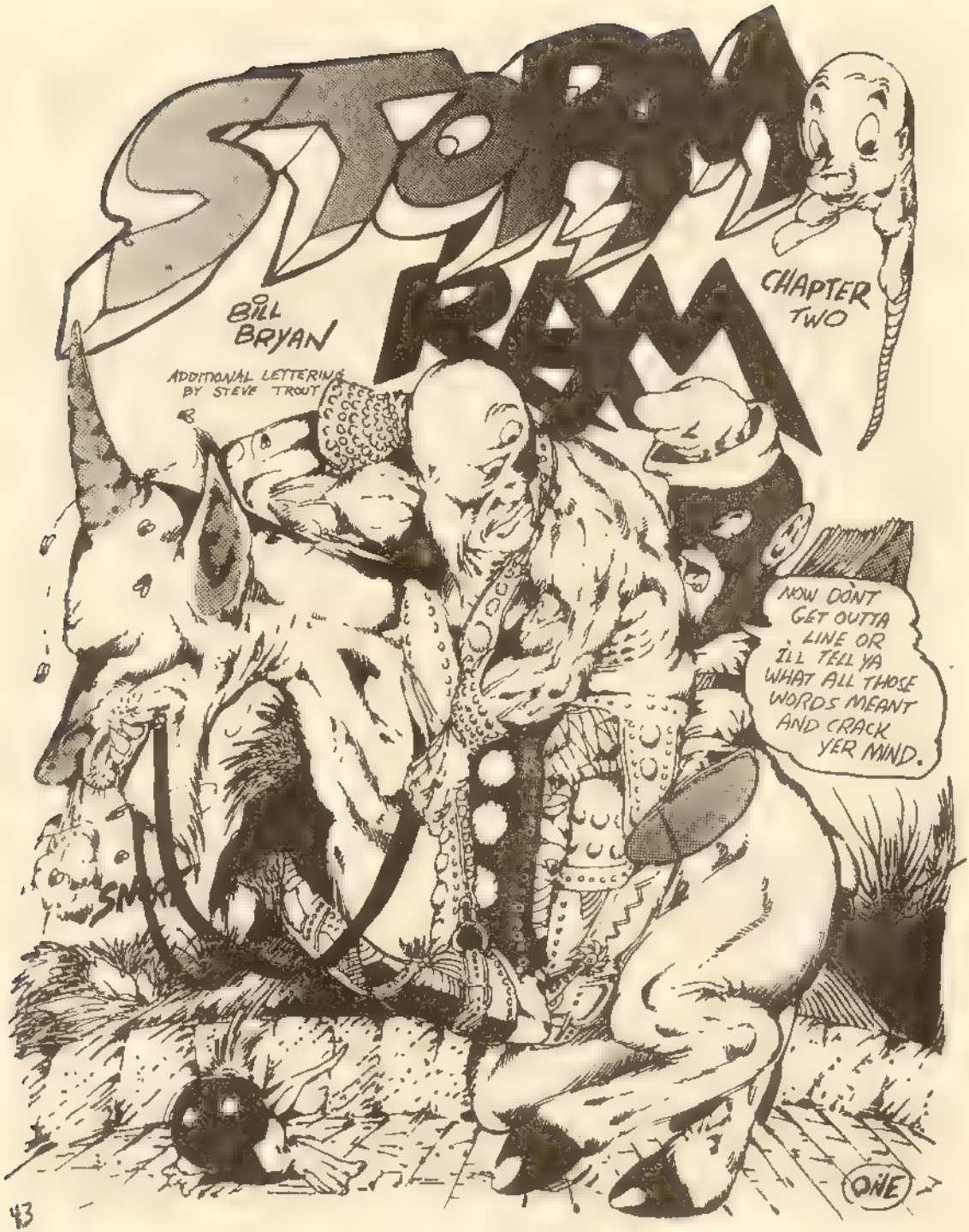

"WHY DID HE LOOK AT ME? WHAT DID THAT GUY IN THE MASK WANT?" THESE ARE THOUGHTS YOU MUST LEAVE BEHIND AS YOU LEAVE THE 'SECRET PLACE' ON YOUR WAY HOME TO A MOM AND A DAD WHO'S RARELY THERE.
HI MOM!
WHERE WERE YOU?
I SAW A MAN TODAY IN A STEEL MASK! HE CAME FROM BEHIND A WALL AND JUST LOOKED AT ME!
WHAT DID HE DO?
NOTHIN'
...he said he wouldn't...
HUH? WHAT MA?
NOTHING. JUST THINKING ABOUT YOUR FATHER.
ME TOO! HE'S AT WORK AND I'M AT SCHOOL
I HARDLY EVER SEE HIM!
HE DOESN'T EVEN TALK TO ME!
I KNOW, UH ABOUT YOUR DAD, I WANTED TO TELL..
HUH?
THE MAN IN THE MASK IS YOUR FATHER!
WHAT!? WHY!? WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
SHE CRAZY?!
NO! I DON'T KNOW IT'S SOMETH NG I CAN'T EXPLAIN!
BUT MOM! I'M OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW! WHAT DOES HE WANT?
HE DOESN'T WANT TO HURT YOU OR PUNISH YOU- HE JUST WANTS TO TALK EVERYTHING WILL BE OK
3

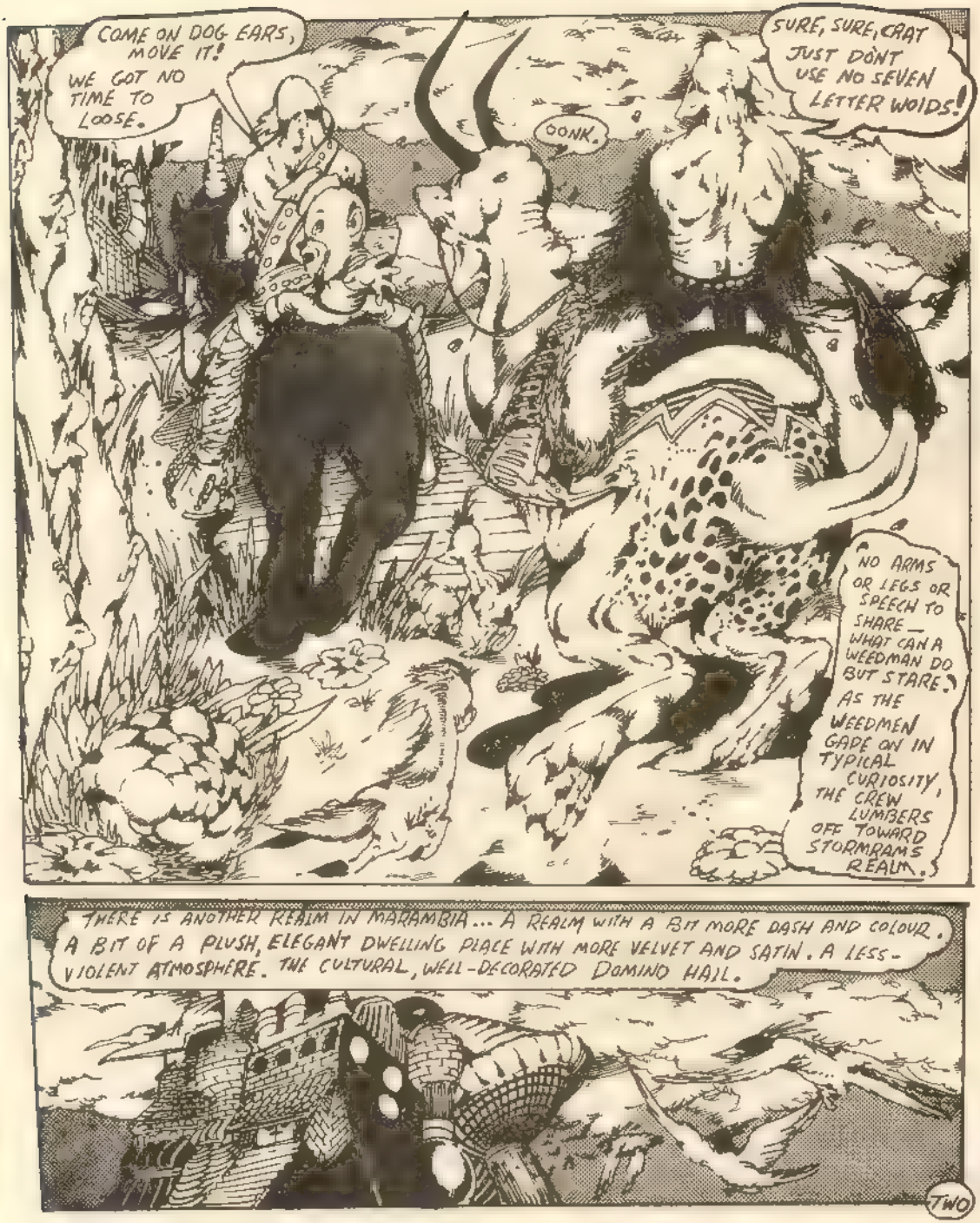
BACK THE NEXT DAY AT THE FAVORITE PLACE BUILDING A NEW WORLD
NEW SCIENCE
IT'S INCREDIBLE! THE FUTURE'S GOING TO BE SO GREAT!
NO!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
NOT HERE!!
TOMORROW YOUNGMAN!
HERE! WE WILL TALK.
4.


IT'S TOMORROW! YOU'RE GOING TO "MEET" YOUR FATHER ON A ONE TO ONE LEVEL FOR THE FIRST TIME!
AN UNCLEAR PATTERN SEARCHED UNTIL A PART OF THE ANSWER EMERGES!
OH MY GOD! MY DAD IS JUST LIKE THE PEOPLE I DON'T LIKE
WHAT WAS HE LIKE WHEN HE WAS MY AGE? I DON'T KNOW. I...
THE IMAGE!
COME HERE SON!
WHY THE MASK DAD?
YOU KNOW I CAN'T! I DON'T BELIEVE IN IT
BELIEVE? JUST BY LOOKING AT IT THE MASK HAS AFFECTED YOU! YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE BUT TO DO WHAT I MUST!
THE NEXT DAY IN SCHOOL
I CAN THINK FOR MYSELF! I'LL FIND A WAY TO GET IT OFF! MUST KEEP ON THINKING! THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY!
THAT'S TOM ADAMS! DON'T TALK TO HIM; HE DOESN'T SEE THINGS THE WAY WE DO!
END
5

Spare Fodder

©1977 - FRAN TREVISANI


STORM RAM
CHAPTER TWO
BILL BRYAN
ADDITIONAL LETTERING BY STEVE TROUT
NOW DON'T GET OUTTA LINE OR I'LL TELL YA WHAT ALL THOSE WORDS MEANT AND CRACK YER MIND.
SMASH
ONE


COME ON DOG EARS, MOVE IT! WE GOT NO TIME TO LOOSE.
OONK.
SURE, SURE, CRAT JUST DONT USE NO SEVEN LETTER WOIDS!
NO ARMS OR LEGS OR SPEECH TO SHARE— WHAT CAN A WEEDMAN DO BUT STARE.
AS THE WEEDMEN GAPE ON IN TYPICAL CURIOSITY, THE CREW LUMBERS OFF TOWARD STORMRAMS REALM.
THERE IS ANOTHER REALM IN MARAMBIA... A REALM WITH A BIT MORE DASH AND COLOUR. A BIT OF A PLUSH, ELEGANT DWELLING PLACE WITH MORE VELVET AND SATIN. A LESS-VIOLENT ATMOSPHERE. THE CULTURAL, WELL-DECORATED DOMINO HALL.
TWO

CRAWP WRENCHER WAS BUT A FUZZY LIZARD AND NOTHING FOR AN ADVANCED INTELLECT TO RECKON WITH.
SLAVER.... AN OVERLY-MUSCULAR NOTHING. NOT FEAR INSPIRING! MY COMMON SENSE, SELF-PRESERVATION INSTINCT AND CAPACITY FOR COMPOSURE DOESN'T ALLOW ME TO WORRY ABOUT SUCH DOPES. THE MOSS MEN... THE CARNIVOROUS BLOPS... BUG BOY AND THE VARIOUS DROIDS OR BEASTIES.... NO THREAT WHEN I REALIZE MY CONFIDENCE, PEACEFUL, SELF ASSURED NATURE AND ABILITY TO ZAP MYSELF INTO NIRVANA. BUT GGORAM! MY DEAR STELLA WE MUST CONTACT STORMRAM. COSH, I'M UNNERVED.
AWK!
GGORAM MUST KNOW I KNOW THEY KNOW IMMEDIATLEY ...IF NOT SOONER.
TO THE CHAPEL.
OH, GOHRD HELP ME, I WAS SUPPOSED TO TALK DOMINO INTO GATHERING FORCES TO DEFEAT SLAVER SO DOMINO WOULD BE WEAKER. CERTAINLY SOME OF HIS MINIONS WOULD BE CUT DOWN... AND MAYBE SLAVER HIMSELF. WITH HIM OUT OF THE WAY GGORAM COULD RULE ABSOLOUTLY.
OH, SAVE MY SOUL! GIVE ME A SIGN! GGORAM WILL BE INFURIATED! OH HELP ME FIND THE COURAGE TO LET HIM KNOW I KNOW THEY KNOW! LET ME SEE THE FACE OF GOHRD!
THREE

GGORAM!
YOU HAVE FAILED ME, BLUNK... FAILED!
I DIDN'T REALLY THINK YOU'D DO BETTER. THAT IS WHY I'M HERE.
NOW EVERYBODY BITES THE DUST!
FOUR

HEY, CRAT... IT'S GETTIN COLD AN' WINDY OUT HERE.
HOW MUCH LONGER IZZIS GONNA BE?
HEY!
HARRAS DIS BAINS WORDS FOR TEGGALUND THE MIND!
MARAMBIAN WINDS SURE CAN GET STRONG. SOMETIMES TOO STRONG EVEN FOR A CRAT TO HOLD ON TO A...
BOOK.
WUDDA YA KNOW! DA BOOK'S GONE.
NOW HE CAN'T BEND OVER BRAINS WIT' DOSE BIG WOIDS NO MORE.
SAY, CRAT, YOU HAINT GOT DEM WOIDS MEZMARIZED HAS YA?
G-GEE GUYS... UHHH... HOW 'BOUT SOME CHARADES, HUH?
FIVE

AHA, MY SENSORS PICK UP POTENTIAL VIOLENCE!
I'LL TAKE A PUNCH DEN YOU TAKE A PUNCH.
I HAVE COMPUTED WHO THE BAD GUYS ARE.
CLICK!
CLICK!
OBOYOBOYOBOY. I LOVE TO INTERFERE.
DAT'S NO FAIR! ONE PUNCH'LL KILL 'IM.
BESIDES, I ALWAYS ROOT FOR THE UNDER-CRAT.
HOW ABOUT A DEAL? I'LL RUN AWAY AND YOU PUNCH EACH OTHER.
WHAT HO YOU BESTIAL BULLIES, WHY DON'TCHA PICK ON SOMEBODY AS UGLY AS YOU?
CLICK! CLICK!
SKREEEEEK!
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
SKWIK
SKWIK
KACHAACH!
SIX

KOS
SEVEN

I'LL GO TRY TO CONTACT JAPETH RIGHT N—
OOPH!
GREETN'S LORD DOMINO SIR.
HIYA STEL. I BROUGHT A FRIEND FOR YOU TO—
NOW DOMINO! YOU PHILOSOPHIZING DO-NOTHING. YOU RAMBLING NON-ENTITY. YOU FACELESS EX-BEING. YOUR MIND IS CLOSED TO EVERYTHING EXCEPT YOUR GOODY-GOODY WAY OF LIFE! YOU CAN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE WAYS OF AGGRESSION...
MY MIND? NOT OPEN? WELL IT'S NOT FLUNG WIDE, BUT I LIKE TO THINK IT'S USUALLY AJAR. NOT TO SOUND TOO EGO-CENTRIFICAL, BUT I'VE ALWAYS FELT LIKE A LIAR WHENEVER I SAID THE LINE: I THINK WE'RE ALL EQUALS.
BUT I SHALL TEACH YOU!
GAK
MEET!
EIGHT

DONT WASTE WORDS ON HIS LIKE, MILORD!
SUCH AS HE CANNOT FATHOM LOGIC OR SENSE.
ALLOW THE RABBIT ROBOT TO SPEAK HIS LANGUAGE!
click
tick!
TILT!
NICE MEETING YOU MISTER RABOT-ROBBIT, UH, ROBIT RA--- UMM, ROB-- UH, RUB-- ER--
NOW FOR THE REST OF YOU! I'LL SAVE THE BROAD FOR LAST!
"BROAD" IS NOT A NICE THING TO CALL A WOMAN!" "LADY" WILL DO!
ANOTHER NUT!
NINE

NOPE, THE SAME NUT THAT KICKED YOUR ASS LAST TIME.
STORMRAM!
TERRIBLE ECHO IN HERE, ISN'T THERE?
-MP!
NOW WHAT ARE YOU STRETCHING OUT FOR? I'M JUST WARMING UP...
IF ITS A DUEL YOU'RE DEMANDING, YOU'LL NOT FIND ME SWORDLESS.
OH, DON'T BOTHER CONVERSING, I KNOW YOU HAVE A LIMITED MASTERY OF THE BRITISH LANGUAGE!
TODAY YOU PERISH, BLACK EYES!
TEN

KRRK! THIS IS —AKK— MORE —CHUKK— LIKE IT!
ROBERT!
MY CLOAK! WELL, I DON'T NEED IT TO MUTILATE YOU!
YOU MISERABLE UNFORTUNATE PITIFUL RIDICULOUS....
I WAS GOING TO SAY USELESS BUT YOU DO SERVE A PURPOSE; YOU MAKE ME FEEL GOOD ABOUT BEING ME!
(ELEVEN)

I'M OFFENDING EVERYTHING MY YOGI TAUGHT ME... THE WAYS OF PEACE. BUT MY EVERY MUSCLE ACHES TO TEAR OUT HIS GIZZARD! I'M FIGHTING TWO PEOPLE AT ONCE: GGORAM AND-
-MYSEL---
-HUKK!
UUNNNGH! DAMN YOU!
HEE HEE!
YER FAILING BLACK EYES!
EAT SOME DIRT.
OOOOG!
TWELVE

THIRTEEN

STELLA!
CAN'T CALL UPON MY GODS FOR STRENGTH, THEY'RE GODS OF PEACE... WHAT? WHAT??
STELLA AND JAPETH MUST LIVE!
CAN'T LET HIM AT THEM.
NNAAGG
OOOK!
GNNN!
FOURTEEN

YOU DIRTY Y-YOU DIRRTIE- WHY MUST YOU EXIST, YOU DIR—
-TY----
HG GIG HG
GRRRRGLE.
HKGA!
GNNNNG!
SHHHHHHHHH
SHHHHHHHHHHH
SHHHHHHHH
FIFTEEN
AND SO T ENDS..

Is your collection complete?

A+PLUS

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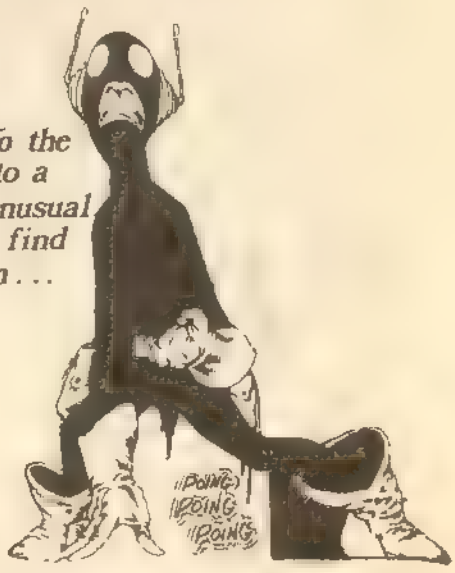
A+PLUS 3!



68 Pages

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Kevin Siembieda
Alex Marciniszyn
CO-EDITORS

Jim Dombrowski
ART DIRECTOR

Matheus Gawel
BUSINESS ADVISOR

Tom Orzechowski
A+PLUS LOGO

John Benson
BACK COVER DESIGN

Kevin Siemoieda
FRONT COVER

Arnold Tiddleburg
EDITORIALS

Due to a lack of space A+PLUS 3 did not contain a letters page. So this issue we've added a page and, along with comments on issue Two, a few on issue One and issue Three...

Dear Kevin,
A+PLUS One was fantastic! First off, I'd like to thank you for the fast service.
As for the issue itself; it was truly a surprise. Artwork is excellent.
Unfortunately your story, Kevin, while being the best written was not my favorite.
Younger brother Brian's little story "PARAPHERNALIA" was a lot of fun. A really nice little tale.
"STARGOD" & "THE FOOL" were also really good and I hope to see more of them in future issues.
I'm sure that this mag of yours has a long future ahead of it. Please enclose a subscription rate if available, Thanx.

Gordon Alvarez
Taunton, Ma.

..Glad you enjoyed issue One Gordon. I'm sorry to say that both STARGOD and THE FOOL will not reappear in the forseeable future.
About subscriptions- just watch future editorial pages because, at present, we do not find subs to be advantageous...

Dear Sirs,
I bought #1 and thought it was a very fine first attempt.

Patrick Karns
Greenville, Mi

P.S.
Glad to see something constructive-publishing wise- come out of the Motor City.

..Detroit has given the east and west coast a lot of new talent over the years; we just thought we'd save a few people the trip and provide an outlet at the source.

Dear Kevin and Alex,
As unaccustomed as I am to writing uncomplimentary letters, I'm afraid I feel you need one this time.
I recently received the issue of A+PLUS 3 that I ordered after being inundated with ads for this "great, new fan mag out of Detroit that all of Fandom is raving about". I'm afraid I can't see why.

I feel bad about that though. You see, I truly enjoyed your editorial and agreed with much of what you had to say. It's true that there is probably a lot of money to be made from exploiting those idiot fads that the masses of America eat up at regular intervals,...selling heroin is pretty profitable too, but not something to brag about. So, you don't go the commercial route. You can experiment or even try taking old ideas farther. Quality comes from various sources.
The problem with most of A+PLUS is that I don't see much quality work in it. Not at first glance at least. And to tell you the truth, at this point in time, I haven't been able to do much more than thumb through it. Even the apparently attractive cover doesn't stand up to very close scrutiny. Inside there is not one strong piece of art, that I can see. I'm in no way an authority on art, just a struggling fan artist, but I can still tell a sloppy or poorly executed piece from a clean, tight one usually. Terry Austin's inks on "Once Upon A Time" are clean but the pencils by Mike Kucharski are amazingly unexciting. Not bad really, just dull. Damned sight better on the eyes than some of those other strips though. With some of them, like STORM-RAM, the art is so muddy and the lettering so lame that I feel not the slightest inclination to find out the merits of the scripting. I guess the most specific thing I could say is that it's overly ambitious in its layout and what it's trying to depict. The balance and embellishment just can't pull it off.
The first strip is the one with most promise. Not for this one especially, but for what future projects that this talent may produce. The HARLEQUIN isn't all that bad, it grows on you. I liked the first part pretty much, but the second was a bit more directionless, getting more incomprehensible, for me, as it went on. I did find the character of the silent clown a fairly strong one, strangely suited for the action of the first part of the story. The weakest areas of the art lie in the awkward slant of many of the drawings and the uneven mixture of serious style and cartoony style.
The "BUSINESS AS USUAL" strip would have seemed more in place in a mimeoed zine or E stencil. Cute but still real amateurish.
The "PARAPHERNALIA" strip isn't real bad, mostly just weak. There's little or no strength to many of the lines and the style of drawing is just too static for the cartooning it'd like to be. As for the scripting, well, a lot of jokes are set up, but the punchlines are consistently unrewarding. Boy, no expense was taken in thinking up the satiric names the elves were given. Sorry, I just couldn't help but notice. I will heartily admit that I enjoyed the way the Utopian solution joke was pulled off. An apt comment on America... "You can have everything and anything you want if you'll only forego your annoying responsibilities over your own lives and common sense".
The most obvious thing wrong visually with "VAUDEVIL" is that it has better zip work than inks, both of which are excessively ambitious. The thing is that I don't think it does much good to have zipatone until you know how to ink. It can't/won't compensate for the other's weaknesses.
Story didn't do much for me either, he says abruptly.
"REFLECTIONS" was negligable, while the last piece wasn't bad, I've seen it done much better.
Back cover is well executed, for what it is.
Still reading, huh?
Sorry about all this negative criticism, but when you publish a big, 68 page offset mag with full color cover, people are going to expect (or at least hope) for a well executed effort. And I really don't think you

guys delivered. Usually I would shrug my shoulders and not think more about it. I've seen much worse in my years of 'zine reading. But after all the rave reviews I've seen in your ads, and after reading that promising editorial, it was such a long fall downwards to look at and read.

I hope you get something positive out of this letter. I spent a while working at it because I get the feeling you guys care enough to deserve it. If you do care though, I think, as editors, you're going to have to be more discriminating about what you accept for publication and what you attempt to produce yourselves.

I haven't seen the first two issues, but if I'm to believe you when you say that #3 is the best, well...A+PLUS still has a long way to go.

May the curse you place on myself and my ancestors not be too severe, not as much as this letter, at least. My sincere wishes for your future success. Write back if you like. I'd enjoy hearing from you.

Yers in fandom,

Richard Bruning
1438 Rutledge St.
Madison, Wisc.
53703

..You're right Richard, we're always saying A+PLUS "is the best". We think it is the best we can produce (at the time). As you can see each issue is different in both content and approach. I guess it's mainly a matter of personal preference and we certainly try to give our readers the best we can.

I thought it would be interesting to include your reply to the letter Kevin sent you.

Dear Kevin,

First of all, I'd like to thank you for taking the time and energy to respond to my criticisms on A+PLUS, as harsh as some of them were.

Secondly, let me thank you for sending the complimentary copy of #2. Too tell you the truth, I enjoyed this one more than #3!

I found it "cleaner- looking" overall. As one of my major criticisms of #3 was the messy look of the art, the work in #2 displayed a more controlled use of lines, with solid black areas being used effectively. This is most obvious in "THE GARGOYLE AND P-M-E", but is evident in almost all the stories. "THE RESURRECTION OF PETER PEABRAIN" is the lightest style in the book, as it should be, being a humorous strip, although a few bolder lines here and there can help to draw emphasis to supplement a gag.

A few of them were too experimental in the writing department for me to understand what was going on. Though, maybe there is no plot for me to find and isn't supposed to be, dogged ol' me is always looking for one anyway. That's why some UG's drive me up the wall I guess.

"The Adventures of the Gargoyle and Punkie My Eye" is one of those truly successful attempts at a fresh, different approach to graphic story-telling. It was light-hearted but moving. Entertaining and unconventional. And plain old Well Done. The personality of the Gargoyle was quite unique and so unmonsterlike. Spiffy as hell in that 3-piece too!

. Still, even the Gargoyle must take back seat to "The Coming of Man". A very fine science fiction story Kevin. Your writing showed a real sense of maturity unseen in most amateur or fan writing. This story had a warm timeless feeling about it. None of the usual cliches are to be found here. The art is also definitely fine, telling the story with little frills. The proportions are a little weak in some spots and the penwork suffers somewhat from not displaying much variety in the strokes and thickness of line. It's a might blunt but still very clean and controlled. Decent zip work too. The ending was quite beautiful, so unlike the flash and noise seen in most professional comics. Getting those 'tears' out of the robot at the end...whew, I was impressed...

I wasn't too crazy about "Truck Rodgers", though it was still fairly well executed. I was hoping for more out of "Sidesteps", but after page 1, the rest was a disappointment, though certainly not bad. The "Paraphernalia" story was o.k. but not too inspired. The art on "The Pact" was pretty good, yet the story baffled me the most of all. "Way-out" was great and superbly executed. I thought the yo-yo was "Far-out". "15 Miles Up" was not that hot, and I would have left it off after the first page, which is the best part of it.

So, as I said before, over-all, I preferred it to the following issue. This makes me anxious to see what #4,5,6,? look like. I do hope you folks can continue your fine experiment into the unrealized areas of graphic story-telling and illustration.

Best of luck!

Richard Bruning

..I'm not just saying this to sell more issues of A+PLUS but each issue is actually quite different from the last in so many ways that at least two different issues of A+PLUS need to be seen to better appreciate what we are doing. So come on folks BUY THOSE BACK ISSUES! (whoops)...

Dear People,

I am writing this letter because I am really impressed with your last issue (#2) of A+PLUS Comics.

I think your artwork and stories are of the highest caliber I have ever seen in underground comics, and I have been collecting them for several years so I'm no stranger to the beast.

My favorites were "The Coming of Man" and "The Resurrection of Peter Peabrain" both of which showed much care and thought. Perhaps even brilliance.

One more thing, the editorial on the inside front cover was excellent. Without total freedom of expression of ideas, literature becomes a sham, a medium subject to manipulation by the outside influence of any group popular at the moment. This is not to say that these groups are definitely erroneous in their beliefs in any particular instance, but if literature is to say something about man as he is, and not man as he should be, then the priorities of the artist himself must remain unmanipulatable. The work should reflect the artists' views and not necessarily those of his public.

Warren Klofkorn
Hudson, Mich.

Dear Mr. Siembieda,

I sincerely enjoyed your magazine especially the Gargoyle which I think is an interesting and innovative character, if a bit surrealistic. I loved the artwork in the Gargoyle story which was only rivaled by "The Coming of Man" and perhaps "The Pact" art. The other artwork tended to be more cartoony while I prefer more realistic visual works. I thought that all of the stories were interesting and exciting. All in all I thought A+PLUS 2 was well worth the price.

Yours Truly,
Huw D. Evans

..Most people agree with you Huw that a publication the size of A+PLUS is almost impossible to find for $1.00. Recent decisions at the major comic companies, most notably at DC, proves something we knew all along; that the fan and the retailer want more. More importantly, the majority of people buying A+PLUS feel that ours is a quality product.

Dear Kevin,
I got issue #3 and I really loved your cover, great stuff, your "Harlequin" story was also good and reminded me of The Fool. The Harlequin himself is quite an original concept for a hero, being sensitive, shy and somewhat effeminate. A nice rest from the regular macho, bulging muscled stereotype hero that is so prevalent in comics.
"Business As Usual" was an interesting story and quite humorous (especially the bit about the devil yelling up to the angels to stop the racket). The art was a bit lacking in places but passable.
The third story, "Once Upon A Time" was FANTASTIC!!! (I liked it.) The artwork was an unmitigated masterpiece and the story was an interesting and haunting concept. I loved the line, "..soon Vanity's Champion realizes that he is merely killing time." Really sharp writing.
StormRam was very imaginative and had many colorful characters and kept being interesting to the end. The art was, as always, unique and skillfully executed.
"The Paraphernalia" story, "Just Another War" was fairly interesting but rather pedestrian although the artwork looked a bit better. (Best line from this story was, "Yes and I'm sure it will be a knee wound he'll long remember.")
Dombrowski's work on the next story, "Vaudevil", was alright although I like him better when he's doing one page drawings as his style does not help story continuity.
The last story, "Reflections", was not in itself a strong enough concept to run a three page story on, at least not the way it was presented here. The artwork, I'm sorry to have to say this, was just plain lousy. I thought it detracted from the overall excellence of your magazine. I don't mean to discourage Mr. Simon as I rather liked his cartoon work in an earlier issue.
The back (inside back cover) picture by Fujiwara was a nice piece of work and the zipatone in the background highlighted it nicely.

Truly,
Huw D. Evans
Sask., CANADA

..What can I say Huw? I'm glad you liked most of the book and I hope you find this one even better...

Dear Sirs,
My tastes lie in the direction of hard-core sf, so I am not truly the best audience for your satire, but the rest of your second issue was up to my greatest expectations. I have been waiting to see this kind of quality sf in comics after seeing warlock by Starlin and comparing it to all the weak stories of the Charlton era and actually of the "Golden Age" of comic memories. All the so-called sf stories by all the major companies (Marvel, DC, Charlton) were always poor substitutes for a good sf book, where they really had a great potential to create a "Star Wars" in the comic medium. It's beginning to get better but I always want to see more than is available and is of good quality story and art. I hope to see you around for many, many issues.

Gregory D. Driver
Jerome, Az

Dear Kevin,
Must say I enjoyed A+PLUS 3 but I have a few questions. Will STORMRAM reappear? I found the first installment quite interesting in both art and story. Bill Bryan in my opinion is definitely one of your better artists.
My next question is- are you looking for contributors?
Looking forword to issue four.

Yours,
Tom Adams
Parma, Ohio

..Yes, STORMRAM is back, in this issue and yes, we always invite contributions...

Dear Kev+Company,
I found A+PLUS #2 to be one of the best fan or semi-pro productions I have ever read.

Howard G. Anshell
Oak Park, Ill.

P.S. Also, I would appreciate any information on other projects you are involved in; keep up the good work.

..Other projects? Glad you asked Howard. I guess the most talked about project is a twenty minute animated feature for possible syndication. MEGATON PUBLICATIONS, by the time this is published, will become MEGATON PRODUCTIONS. We already have a full fledged studio and all of our artists/writers are preparing material for the commercial market

While we're on the subject of other projects I think it would be appropriate to mention a few things of import and to answer a few of the most often asked questions we've been getting...
"What about that '90 page epic' you guys are planning"?
Due to other projects (some of which I already mentioned) the 90 page epic to be co-produced by Kevin Siembieda and Jim Dombrowski is just a plot outline at present. All I can say right now is that it's science fantasy and judging by the popularity of the writers/artists should be well received.
"You're getting into Video?!", is more of an exclamation than a question. It makes a bit more sense when you realize that a few of our staff are into photography (one is actually in the process of producing/filming his own 16mm film) combine that with a few interested writers (and artists) and you've got the nucleus for a proposed one hour video tape program being planned for public t.v..
It may also surprise a few people to learn that Bill Bryan makes/creates his own costumes and is not a half bad actor and puppeteer.
At present, the script is being written and one local t.v. station has shown interest in the idea. "What's the idea?", you ask. Humor, satire, with a dash of science fiction/fantasy- experimental t.v. here we come!
"What about future issues?"
I'm sure all of you have seen the full page ad this issue featuring The Harlequin who will be appearing in our next issue- if you haven't... But, issue 5, I don't know what to say, a total cover experiment, Brian Siembieda with a "serious" story for PARAPHERNALIA. I've only read the first page of "Down To The Last Man" and it's going to be a blockbuster! And if that isn't experimental enough A+PLUS 6 is shaping up to be our all humor issue. With all the ideas people are having 68 pages won't be enough!

NOTE: As of this issue A+PLUS ads Fredrik King to its staff of contributors. We hope you enjoy his article THE IVORY TOWER as much as we did. Welcome Fred!

They said he was the BALANCE.

Who were THEY?

The balance of...?

What dark secrets are locked within the enigmatic clown?

Why must he die?!

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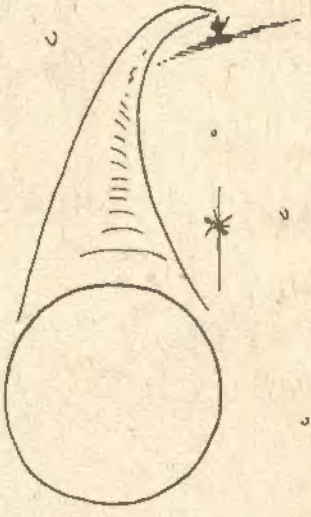

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